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REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN.

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THE NATIONAL BURNS

EDITED BY

REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN,

INCLUDING

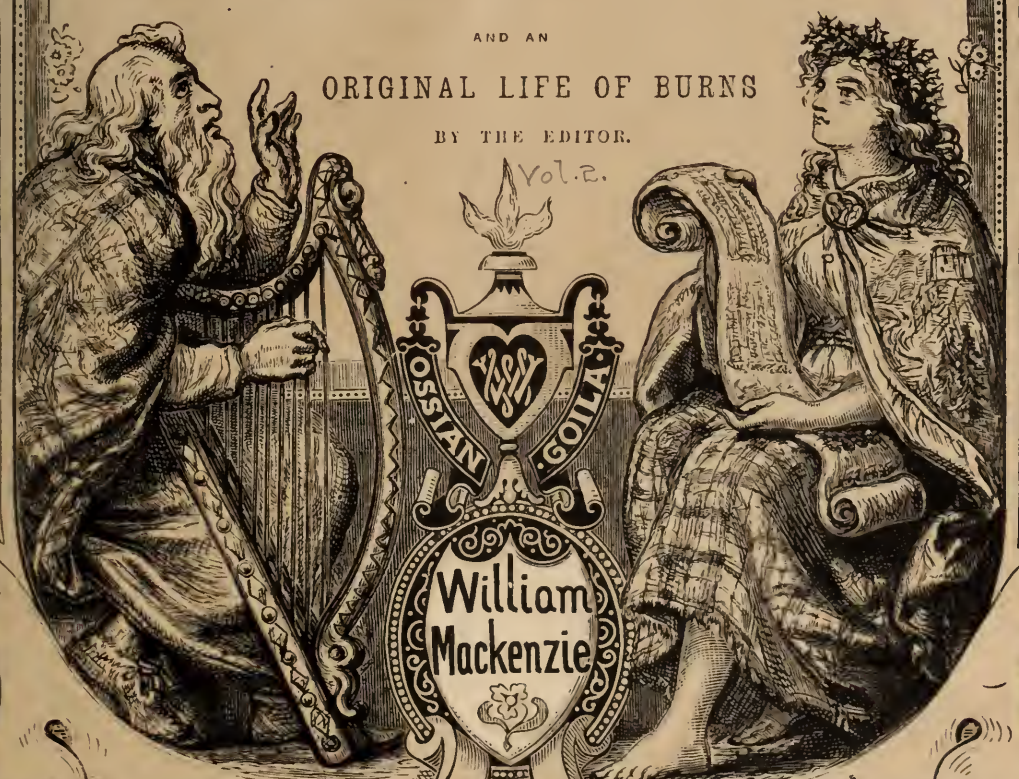
THE AIRS OF ALL THE SONGS

AND AN

ORIGINAL LIFE OF BURNS

BY THE EDITOR.

Vol. 2.



LONDON GLASGOW EDINBURGH.

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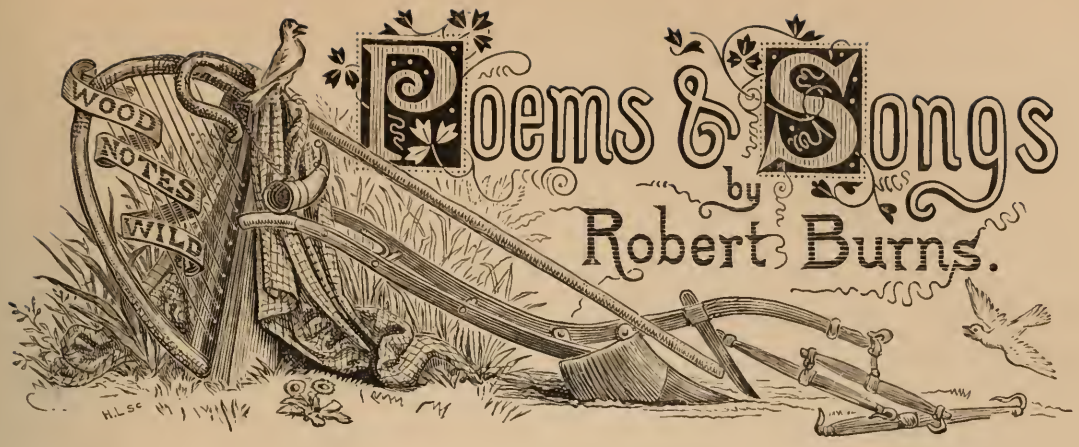


VERSICLES, EPITAPHS, &c.

ON MISS J. SCOTT, OF AYR.

O had each Scot of ancient times,
Been Jeany Scott, as thou art;
The bravest heart on English ground,
Had yielded like a coward.

POETICAL REPLY TO AN INVITATION.

Sir, Mossgiel, 1786.

Yours this moment I unseal,
And faith, I 'm gay and hearty!
To tell the truth, an' shame the deil,
I am as fou as Bartie:

But Foorsday, Sir, my promise leal,
Expect me o' your party,
If on a beastie I can speel,
Or hurl in a cartie.—R. B.

THE REPLY.*

Like Æsop's lion, Burns says, "Sore I feel
All others' scorn—but damn that ass's heel."

GRACE BEFORE MEAT.

Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some would eat that want it;
But we hae meat and we can eat,
Sae let the Lord be thankit.

THE BOOK-WORMS.†

Through and through th' inspired leaves,
Ye maggots, make your windings;
But O respect his lordship's taste,
And spare the golden bindings.

A GRACE BEFORE DINNER, EXTEMPORE.

O Thou who kindly dost provide
For every creature's want!
We bless Thee, God of Nature wide,
For all Thy goodness lent:
And, if it please Thee, heavenly Guide,
May never worse be sent;
But, whether granted or denied,
Lord, bless us with content! Amen!

A GRACE AFTER DINNER, EXTEMPORE.

O Thou, in whom we live and move—
Who mad'st the sea and shore;
Thy goodness constantly we prove,
And, grateful, would adore:
And, if it please Thee, Power above!
Still grant us, with such store,
The friend we trust, the fair we love—
And we desire no more. Amen!

* "The Reply:" to one of his assailants in reference to his famous Stirling epigram. See Life.

† Written by Burns on a nobleman's copy of Shakspeare, splendidly bound, but unread and worm-eaten.

EXTEMPORANEOUS GRACE ON A HAGGIS.*

Ye powers wha gie us a' that 's guid,
Still bless auld Caledonia's brood
Wi' great John Barleycorn's heart's bluid,
In stoups or luggies;
And on our board the king o' food,
A glorious haggis!

REPLY TO A GENTLEMAN,

WHO ASKED IF HE WOULD NOT LIKE TO BE A SOLDIER.

I murder hate by flood or field,
Though glory's name may screen us;
In wars at home I 'll spend my blood—
Life-giving wars of Venus.
The deities that I adore
Are social Peace and Plenty;
I 'm better pleased to make one more,
Than be the death of twenty.

I would not die like Socrates,
For all the fuss of Plato;
Nor would I with Leonidas,
Nor yet would I with Cato:
The zealots of the Church and State
Shall ne'er my mortal foes be;
But let me have bold Zimri's fate,
Within the arms of Cozbi! †

EPIGRAM ADDRESSED TO AN ARTIST. ‡

Dear ——, I 'll gie ye some advice,
You 'll tak it no uncivil:
Ye shouldna paint at angels mair,
But try and paint the devil.
To paint an angel 's kittle wark,
Wi' Nick, there 's little danger:
You 'll easy draw a lang-kent face,
But no sae weel a stranger.—R. B.

EXTEMPORANEOUS EFFUSION

ON BEING APPOINTED TO AN EXCISE DIVISION.

Searching auld wives' barrels,
Ochon, the day!
That clarty barm should stain my laurels;
But—what 'll ye say?
These movin' things ca'd wives an' weans.
Wad move the very hearts o' stanes!

* Expanded afterwards into his famous lines on a "Haggis."
† See Numbers xxv. 8–15.
‡ A painter in Edinburgh who was found by Burns painting Jacob's Dream. Burns wrote these lines on the back of a sketch still preserved in the painter's family.

THE PARTING KISS.

Humid seal of soft affections,
Tenderest pledge of future bliss,
Dearest tie of young connections,
Love's first snowdrop, virgin kiss!

Speaking silence, dumb confession,
Passion's birth, and infant's play,
Dove-like fondness, chaste concession,
Glowing dawn of future day!

Sorrowing joy, Adieu's last action
(Lingering lips must now disjoin),
What words can ever speak affection
So thrilling and sincere as thine!

EPITAPH FOR MR. W. CRUICKSHANK.

Honest Will to Heaven 's away,
And mony shall lament him;
His fau'ts they a' in Latin lay,
In English nane e'er kent them.

ON WILLIAM NICOL.

Ye maggots, feed on Nicol's brain,
For few sic feasts you 've gotten:
And fix your claws in Nicol's heart,
For deil a bit o't 's rotten.

ON A SUICIDE.

Earth'd up, here lies an imp o' hell,
Planted by Satan's dibble;
Poor silly wretch, he 's damned himsel',
To save the Lord the trouble.

CAULD IS THE E'ENIN' BLAST.

Cauld is the e'enin' blast
O' Boreas o'er the pool,
An' dawin' it is dreary,
When birks are bare at Yule.

Cauld blaws the e'enin' blast,
When bitter bites the frost.
And, in the mirk and dreary drift,
The hills and glens are lost:

Ne'er sae murky blew the night
That drifted o'er the hill,
But bonnie Peg-a-Ramsay
Gat grist to her mill.

LINES WRITTEN UNDER THE PICTURE OF THE CELEBRATED MISS BURNS.*

Cease, ye prudes, your envious railing,
Lovely Burns has charms—confess:
True it is, she had one failing,
Had a woman ever less?

THE KIRK OF LAMINGTON.

As cauld a wind as ever blew
As cauld a priest as ever spak',
A cauld kirk an' in 't but few—
The deil tak' me an I gae back!

WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCH.

A cauld, cauld day December blew,
A cauld, cauld kirk, and in 't but few;
A caulder minister never spak',
Ye 'se a' be het or I come back.

GRACE AFTER MEAT.

Lord, we thank, and thee adore,
For temporal gifts we little merit;
At present we will ask no more—
Let William Hislop† give the spirit.

THE KEEKIN' GLASS.

A Lord in a state of inebriation, while dining in Mr. Miller's of Dalswinton, asked about one of his daughters, "Wha 's yon howlet-faced thing in the corner?" Burns replied as follows:—

How daur ye ca' me "Howlet-face?"
Ye blear-e'ed, wither'd spectre!
Ye only spied the keekin'-glass,
And there ye saw your picture.

ON A SWEARING COXCOMB.

Here cursing, swearing, Burton lies,
A buck, a beau, or "Dem my eyes!"
Who in his life did little good,
And his last words were, "Dem my blood!"

ON JOHN BUSHBY, ESQ., TINWALD DOWNS.‡

Here lies John Bushby, honest man;
Cheat him, Devil—if you can!

* The Miss Burns of these lines was more notorious than reputable in Edinburgh at the period when Burns first visited that city.

† "William Hislop:" of the Globe Tavern. ‡ See Life.

THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.§

The Solemn League and Covenant
Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears;
But it sealèd Freedom's sacred cause—
If thou 'rt a slave, indulge thy sneers.

ON A SCHOOLMASTER IN CLEISH PARISH, FIFESHIRE.

Here lie Willie Michie's banes,
O Satan, when ye tak him,
Gie him the schulin' o' your weans,
For clever deils he 'll mak them!

ON BEING ASKED WHY GOD HAD MADE MISS DAVIES SO LITTLE AND MRS. —— SO LARGE.

WRITTEN ON A PANE OF GLASS IN THE INN AT MOFFAT.

Ask why God made the gem so small?
And why so huge the granite?—
Because God meant mankind should set
That higher value on it.

LINES WRITTEN ON A PANE OF GLASS,

ON THE OCCASION OF A NATIONAL THANKSGIVING FOR A NAVAL VICTORY.

Ye hypocrites! are these your pranks?
To murder men, and give God thanks!
Desist, for shame!—proceed no further,
God wont accept your thanks for murther!

THE BLACK-HEADED EAGLE: A FRAGMENT.

ON THE DEFEAT OF THE AUSTRIANS BY DUMOURIER, AT GEMAPPE, NOVEMBER, 1792.

The black-headed eagle,
As keen as a beagle,
He hunted o'er height and o'er howe;
But fell in a trap,
On the braes o' Gemappe;
E'en let him come out as he dow.

ON GRIZEL GRIM.

Here lies with Death auld Grizel Grim,
Lincluden's ugly witch;
O Death! how horrid is thy taste
To lie with such a b—h.

§ Spoken in reply to a gentleman who sneered at the Covenant.

ON HEARING THAT THERE WAS FALSEHOOD IN THE REV. DR. BABINGTON'S VERY LOOKS.

THAT there is falsehood in his looks,
I must and will deny:
They tell their Master is a knave,
And sure they do not lie.

YOU 'RE WELCOME, WILLIE STEWART.*

You 're welcome, Willie Stewart,
You 're welcome, Willie Stewart,
There 's ne'er a flower that blooms in May,
That 's half sae welcome 's thou art!

Come, bumpers high, express your joy,
The bowl we maun renew it;
The tappet hen, gae bring her ben,
To welcome Willie Stewart.

May foes be strang, and friends be slack,
Ilk action, may he rue it;
May woman on him turn her back
That wrangs thee, Willie Stewart!

ON ANDREW TURNER.

Addressed to a coxcomb named Andrew Turner, who patronized him, and asked a specimen of his verse from the moment, which he gave him thus:—

IN se'enteen hunder and forty-nine,
The deil gat stuff to mak a swine,
An' coost it in a corner;
But wilily he chang'd his plan,
An' shap'd it something like a man,
An' ca'd it Andrew Turner.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.,†

WITH SOME BOOKS.

O COULD I give thee India's wealth,
As I this trifle send;
Because thy joy in both would be
To share them with a friend.

But golden sands did never grace
The Heliconian stream;
Then take what gold could never buy—
An honest Bard's esteem.

* Written on a tumbler by Burns, on the arrival of a friend, Mr. W. Stewart, a factor in Nithsdale, which became Sir Walter Scott's property.

† "John M'Murdo, Esq.:" this gentleman was steward to the Duke of Queensberry; alluded to in Second Epistle to Graham of Fintry.

LINES ON JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

BLEST be M'Murdo to his latest day!
No envious cloud o'ercast his evening ray;
No wrinkle, furrow'd by the hand of care,
Nor ever sorrow add one silver hair!
O may no son the father's honour stain,
Nor ever daughter give the mother pain!

LINES

WRITTEN ON A WINDOW OF THE GLOBE TAVERN, DUMFRIES.

THE graybeard, old Wisdom, may boast of his treasures,
Give me with gay Folly to live;
I grant him his calm-blooded, time-settled pleasures,
But Folly has raptures to give.

LINES

WRITTEN ON A WINDOW, AT THE KING'S ARMS TAVERN, DUMFRIES.

YE men of wit and wealth, why all this sneering
'Gainst poor excisemen? give the cause a hearing;
What are your landlords' rent-rolls?—taxing ledgers;
What premiers? what even monarchs?—mighty gaugers;
Nay, what are priests, those seeming godly wise-men,
What are they, pray, but spiritual excisemen?

ON ROBERT RIDDELL, ESQ.‡

To Riddell, much lamented man,
This ivied cot was dear;
Wand'rer, dost value matchless worth?
This ivied cot revere.

ON A NOTED COXCOMB,

CAPTAIN WILLIAM RODDICK, OF CORBISTON.

LIGHT lay the earth on Billy's breast,
His chicken heart so tender;
But build a castle on his head,
His scull will prop it under.

ON COMMISSARY GOLDIE'S BRAINS.

LORD, to account who dares thee call,
Or e'er dispute thy pleasure?
Else why, within so thick a wall,
Enclose so poor a treasure?

‡ "Robert Riddell, Esq.:" of Friars Carse.

ON GABRIEL RICHARDSON, BREWER, DUMFRIES.

HERE Brewer Gabriel's fire 's extinct,
And empty all his barrels:
He 's blest—if, as he brew'd, he drink,
In upright, honest morals.

TO MISS JESSY LEWARS,*

WITH BOOKS WHICH THE BARD PRESENTED HER.

THINE be the volumes, Jessy fair,
And with them take the Poet's prayer,
That Fate may, in her fairest page,
With ev'ry kindliest, best presage
Of future bliss, enrol thy name:
With native worth and spotless fame,
And wakeful caution, still aware
Of ill—but chief, Man's felon snare;
All blameless joys on earth we find,
And all the treasures of the mind—
These be thy guardian and reward;
So prays thy faithful friend, the Bard.

THE EARL OF GALLOWAY.†

WHAT dost thou in that mansion fair?
Flit, Galloway, and find
Some narrow, dirty, dungeon cave,
The picture of thy mind.

ON SIR DAVID MAXWELL OF CARDONESS.

BLESS the Redeemer, Cardoness,
With grateful, lifted eyes,
Who said that not the soul alone,
But body too, shall rise;
For had he said, "The soul alone
From death I will deliver:"
Alas, alas, O Cardoness!
Then hadst thou slept for ever!

ON WILLIAM GRAHAM, ESQ., OF MOSSKNOWE.

"STOP thief!" dame Nature call'd to Death,
As Willy drew his latest breath;
How shall I make a fool again?
My choicest model thou hast ta'en.

* See LIFE. † See LIFE.

ON BURNS' HORSE BEING IMPOUNDED.

WAS e'er poor poet sae befitted,
The maister drunk—the horse committed:
Puir harmless beast! tak' thee nae care,
Thou 'lt be a horse when he 's nae mair (*mayor*).

MY bottle is my holy pool,
That heals the wounds o' care an' dool;
And pleasure is a wanton trout,
An' ye drink it dry, ye 'll find him out.

THE HENPECKED HUSBAND.

CURS'D be the man, the poorest wretch in life,
The crouching vassal to a tyrant wife!
Who has no will but by her high permission,
Who has no sixpence but in her possession;
Who must to her his dear friend's secrets tell,
Who dreads a curtain lecture worse than hell.
Were such the wife had fallen to my part,
I 'd break her spirit or I 'd break her heart;
I 'd charm her with the magic of a switch,
I 'd kiss her maids, and kick the perverse b—h.

ON THE EARL OF GALLOWAY.

No Stewart art thou, Galloway,
The Stewarts all were brave;
Besides, the Stewarts were but fools,
Not one of them a knave.

ON THE SAME.

BRIGHT ran thy line, O Galloway,
Through many a far-famed sire!
So ran the far-famed Roman way,
And ended in a mire.

ON THE SAME.

SPARE me thy vengeance, Galloway!
In quiet let me live;
I ask no kindness at thy hand,
For thou hast none to give.

ON AN INNKEEPER NICKNAMED "THE MARQUIS."

HERE lies a mock Marquis, whose titles were shamm'd.
If ever he rise, it will be to be damn'd.

THE TOADEATER.

Of Lordly acquaintance you boast,
And the Dukes that you dined with yestreen;
Why, an insect 's an insect at most,
Though it crawl on the curl of a Queen!

PINNED TO MRS. WALTER RIDDELL'S CARRIAGE.

If you rattle along like your Mistress's tongue,
Your speed will outrival the dart;
But a fly for your load, you 'll break down on the road,
If your stuff be as rotten 's her heart.

TO THE BEAUTIFUL MISS ELIZA J——N,

ON HER PRINCIPLES OF LIBERTY AND EQUALITY.

How, Liberty! girl, can it be by thee nam'd?
Equality too! hussey, art not asham'd?
Free and Equal indeed, while mankind thou enchainest,
And over their hearts a proud Despot so reignest!

EXTEMPORE REPLY TO AN INVITATION.

The King's most humble servant, I
Can scarcely spare a minute;
But I 'll be wi' you by an' by;
Or else the Deil 's be in it.

ON CAPTAIN LASCELLES.

When Lascelles thought fit from this world to depart,
Some friends warmly thought of embalming his heart;
A bystander whispers—"Pray don't make so much o't,
The subject is poison, no reptile will touch it."

ON CHLORIS

REQUESTING ME TO GIVE HER A SPRIG OF BLOSSOMED THORN.

From the white-blossom'd sloe my dear Chloris requested
A sprig, her fair breast to adorn:
No, by Heavens! I exclaim'd, let me perish if ever
I plant in that bosom a thorn! *

* The above lines, with an additional stanza by Charles Dibdin were set to a popular and beautiful tune by W. Shield the composer.

PIECES OF UNKNOWN DATE.

CALEDONIA—A BALLAD.

THERE was once a time, but old Time was then young,
That brave Caledonia, the chief of our line,
From some of your northern deities sprung
(Who knows not that brave Caledonia's divine?)
From Tweed to the Orcades was her domain,
To hunt, or to pasture, or do what she would:
Her heav'nly relations there fixèd her reign,
And pledg'd her their godheads to warrant it good.

A lambkin in peace, but a lion in war,
The pride of her kindred, the heroine grew:
Her grandsire, old Odin, triumphantly swore—
"Whoe'er shall provoke thee, th' encounter shall rue!"
With tillage or pasture at times she would sport,
To feed her fair flocks by her green rustling corn;
But chiefly the woods were her fav'rite resort,
Her darling amusement, the hounds and the horn.

Long quiet she reigned; till thitherward steers
A flight of bold eagles * from Adria's strand:
Repeated, successive, for many long years,
They darken'd the air, and they plunder'd the land:
Their pounces were murder, and terror their cry,
They 'd conquer'd and ruin'd a world beside;
She took to her hills, and her arrows let fly,
The daring invaders, they fled or they died.

The Cameleon-Savage disturb'd her repose,
With tumult, disquiet, rebellion, and strife;
Provok'd beyond bearing, at last she arose,
And robb'd him at once of his hopes and his life: †
The Anglian lion, the terror of France,
Oft prowling, ensanguin'd the Tweed's silver flood;
But, taught by the bright Caledonian lance,
He learnèd to fear in his own native wood.

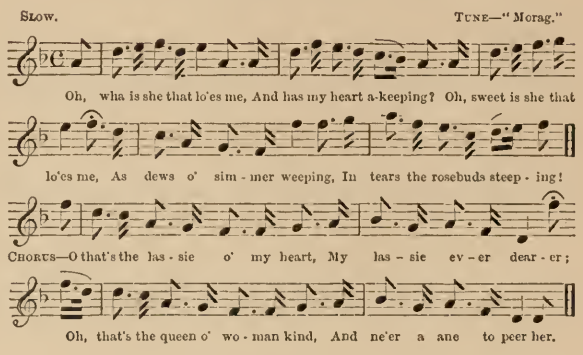
The fell Harpy-raven took wing from the north,
The scourge of the seas, and the dread of the shore; ‡
The wild Scandinavian boar § issued forth
To wanton in carnage and wallow in gore:
O'er countries and kingdoms their fury prevail'd,
No arts could appease them, no arms could repel;
But brave Caledonia in vain they assail'd,
As Largs well can witness, and Loncartie tell. ‖

Thus bold, independent, unconquer'd, and free,
Her bright course of glory for ever shall run:
For brave Caledonia immortal must be;
I 'll prove it from Euclid as clear as the sun:
Rectangle-triangle, the figure we 'll chuse:
The upright is Chance, and old Time is the base;
But brave Caledonia's the hypothenuse;
Then, ergo, she 'll match them, and match them always.

* "Bold eagles:" the Romans.
† The Picts.
‡ "Dread of the shore:" the Saxons.
§ "Scandinavian boar:" the Danes.
‖ "Largs and Loncartie:" two famous battles in which the Danes or Norwegians were defeated.

OH, WHA IS SHE THAT LO'ES ME?

SLOW. TUNE—"Morag."


Oh, wha is she that lo'es me, And has my heart a-keeping? Oh, sweet is she that
lo'es me, As dews o' sim - mer weeping, In tears the rosebuds steep - ing!
CHORUS—O that's the las - sie o' my heart, My las - sie ev - er dear - er;
Oh, that's the queen o' wo - man kind, And ne'er a ane to peer her.

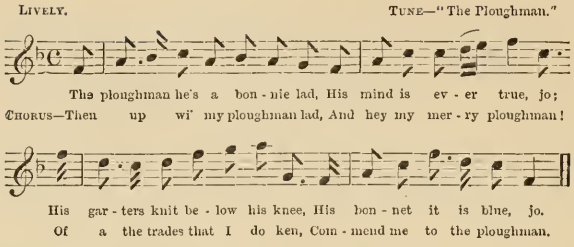
If thou shalt meet a lassie
In grace and beauty charming,
That e'en thy chosen lassie,
Erewhile thy breast sae warming,
Had ne'er sic powers alarming:
Oh, that 's the lassie, &c.

If thou had heard her talking,
And thy attention 's plighted,
That ilka body talking,
But her by thee is slighted;
And thou art all delighted:
Oh, that 's the lassie, &c.

If thou hast met this fair one,
When frae her thou has parted,
If every other fair one,
But her, thou hast deserted,
And thou art broken hearted.
Oh, that 's the lassie, &c.

OLD SONGS IMPROVED.

THE PLOUGHMAN.


Lively.
Tune—"The Ploughman."
The ploughman he's a bon - nie lad, His mind is ev - er true, jo;
Chorus—Then up wi' my ploughman lad, And hey my mer - ry ploughman!
His gar - ters knit be - low his knee, His bon - net it is blue, jo.
Of a the trades that I do ken, Com - mend me to the ploughman.

My ploughman he comes hame at e'en,
He 's aften wat and weary;
Cast aff the wat, put on the dry,
And gae to bed, my dearie!
Then up wi' my ploughman, &c.

I will wash my ploughman's hose,
And I will dress his o'erlay;
I will make my ploughman's bed,
And cheer him late and early.
Then up wi' my ploughman, &c.

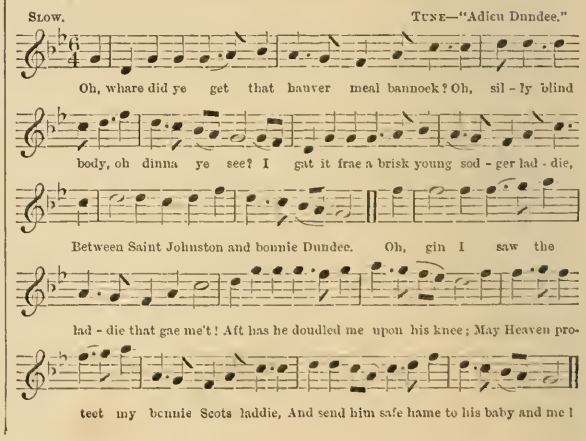
I hae been east, I hae been west,
I hae been at St. Johnston;
The bonniest sight that e'er I saw
Was the ploughman laddie dancin'.
Then up wi' my ploughman, &c.

Snaw-white stockings on his legs,
And siller buckles glancin';
A guid blue bonnet on his head—
And oh, but he was handsome!
Then up wi' my ploughman, &c.

Commend me to the barn-yard,
And the corn-mou', man;
I never gat my coggie fou,
Till I met wi' the ploughman.
Then up wi' my ploughman, &c.

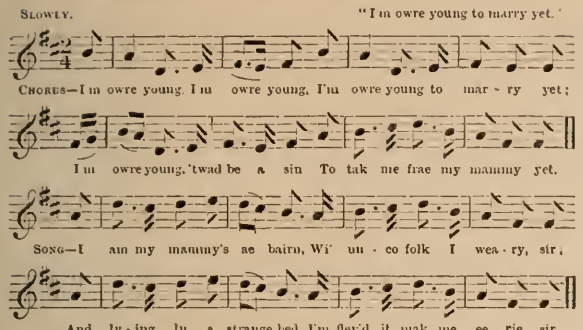
Up wi' my ploughman lad,
And hey my merry ploughman!
Of a' the trades that I do ken,
Commend me to the ploughman.
Then up wi' my ploughman, &c.

OH, WHARE DID YE GET?


Slow.
Tune—"Adieu Dundee."
Oh, whare did ye get that hauver meal bannock? Oh, sil - ly blind
body, oh dinna ye see? I gat it frae a brisk young sod - ger lad - die,
Between Saint Johnston and bonnie Dundee. Oh, gin I saw the
lad - die that gae me't! Aft has he doudled me upon his knee; May Heaven pro-
teet my bonnie Scots laddie, And send him safe hame to his baby and me!

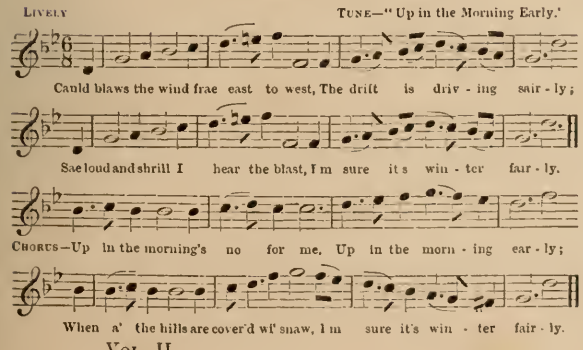
My blessin's upon thy sweet wee lippie,
My blessin's upon thy bonnie e'ebree!
Thy smiles are sae like my blythe sodger laddie,
Thou 's aye the dearer and dearer to me!
But I 'll big a bower on yon bonnie banks,
Where Tay rins wimplin' by sae clear;
And I 'll cleed thee in the tartan sae fine,
And mak' thee a man like thy daddie dear.

I'M OWRE YOUNG TO MARRY YET.

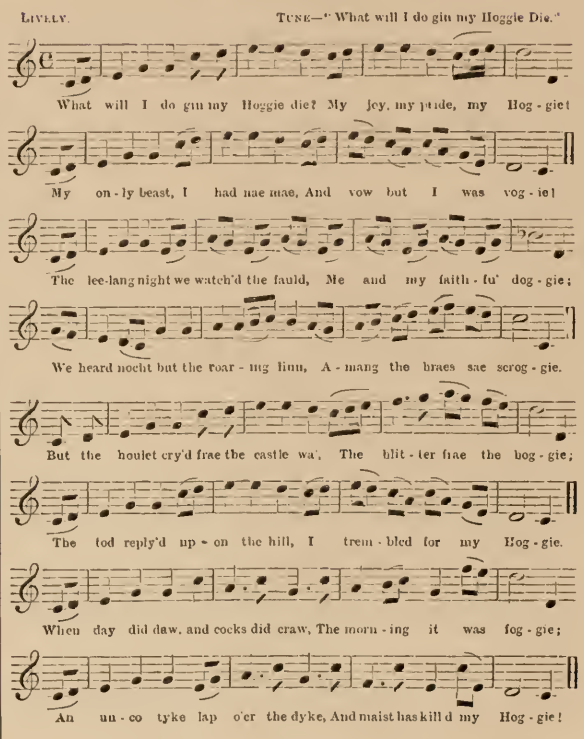

SLOWLY.
"I m owre young to marry yet."
CHORUS—I m owre young. I m owre young, I'm owre young to mar - ry yet;
I m owre young, 'twad be a sin To tak me frae my mammy yet.
SONG—I am my mammy's ae bairn, Wi' un - co folk I wea - ry, sir,
And ly - ing In a strange bed, I'm fley'd it mak me ee - rie, sir.

Hallowmass is come and gane,
The nights are lang in winter, sir,
And you an' I in ae bed,
In trowth, I dare na venture, sir.
I'm owre young, &c.

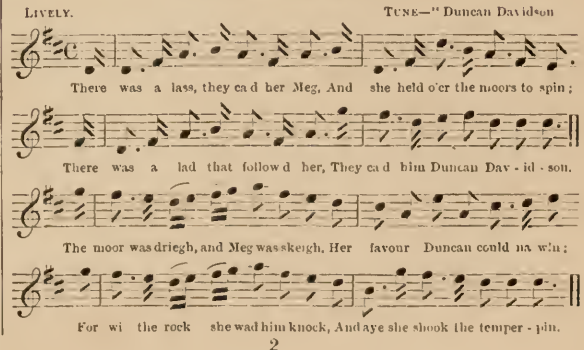
Fu' loud an' shrill the frosty wind
Blaws through the leafless timmer, sir:
But if ye come this gate again,
I 'll aulder be gin simmer, sir.
I'm owre young, &c.

UP IN THE MORNING EARLY.

LIVELY
TUNE—"Up in the Morning Early."
Cauld blaws the wind frae east to west, The drift is driv - ing sair - ly;
Sae loud and shrill I hear the blast, I'm sure it's win - ter fair - ly.
CHORUS—Up in the morning's no for me, Up in the morn - ing ear - ly;
When a' the hills are cover'd wi' snaw, I m sure it's win - ter fair - ly.

The birds sit chittering in the thorn,
A' day they fare but sparely;
And lang 's the night frae e'en to morn—
I 'm sure its winter fairly.
Up in the morning 's, &c.

MY HOGGIE.

LIVELY.
TUNE—"What will I do gin my Hoggie Die."
What will I do gin my Hoggie die? My joy, my pride, my Hog - gie!
My on - ly beast, I had nae mae, And vow but I was vog - ie!
The lee-lang night we watch'd the fauld, Me and my faith - fu' dog - gie;
We heard nocht but the roar - ing linn, A - mang the braes sae scrog - gie.
But the houlet cry'd frae the castle wa', The blit - ter frae the bog - gie;
The tod reply'd up - on the hill, I trem - bled for my Hog - gie.
When day did daw, and cocks did craw, The morn - ing it was fog - gie;
An un - co tyke lap o'er the dyke, And maist has kill'd my Hog - gie!

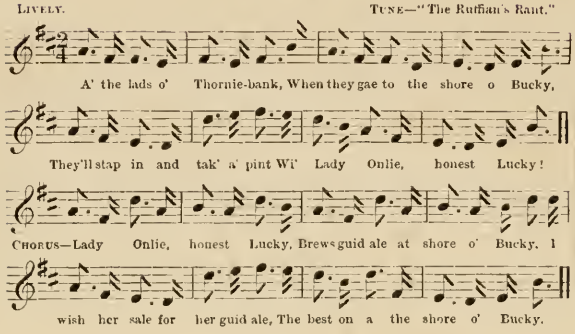
DUNCAN DAVIDSON.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Duncan Davidson
There was a lass, they ca'd her Meg, And she held o'er the moors to spin;
There was a lad that follow'd her, They ca'd him Duncan Dav - id - son.
The moor was driegh, and Meg was skeigh, Her favour Duncan could na win;
For wi the rock she wad him knock, And aye she shook the temper - pin.

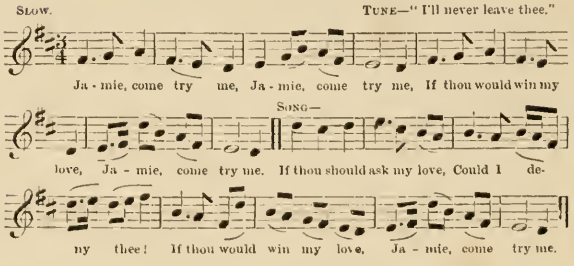
As o'er the moor they lightly foor,
A burn was clear, a glen was green,
Upon the banks they eas'd their shanks,
And aye she set the wheel between:
But Duncan swoor a haly aith,
That Meg should be a bride the morn.
Then Meg took up her spinnin'-graith,
And flang them a' out o'er the burn.

We will big a wee, wee house,
And we will live like king and queen;
Sae blythe and merry 's we will be,
When ye set by the wheel at e'en.
A man may drink, and no be drunk;
A man may fight, and no be slain;
A man may kiss a bonnie lass,
And aye be welcome back again!

LADY ONLY.

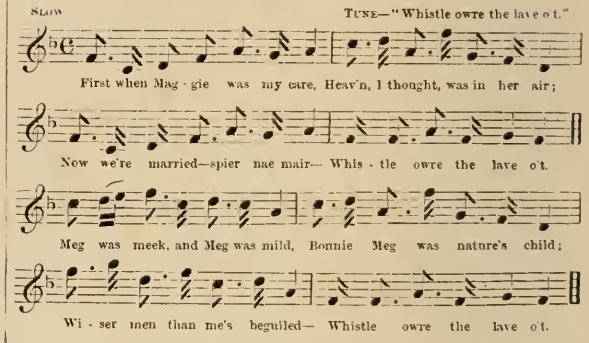

Lively.
Tune—"The Ruffian's Rant."
A' the lads o' Thornie-bank, When they gae to the shore o Bucky,
They'll stap in and tak' a' pint Wi' Lady Onlie, honest Lucky!
Chorus—Lady Onlie, honest Lucky, Brews guid ale at shore o' Bucky. I
wish her sale for her guid ale, The best on a the shore o' Bucky.

Her house sae bien, her curch sae clean,
I wat she is a dainty chucky!
And cheerlie blinks the ingle-gleed
Of Lady Onlie, honest Lucky!
Lady Onlie, honest Lucky, &c.

JAMIE, COME TRY ME.

Slow.
Tune—"I'll never leave thee."
Ja - mie, come try me, Ja - mie, come try me, If thou would win my
Song—
love, Ja - mie, come try me. If thou should ask my love, Could I de-
ny thee! If thou would win my love, Ja - mie, come try me.

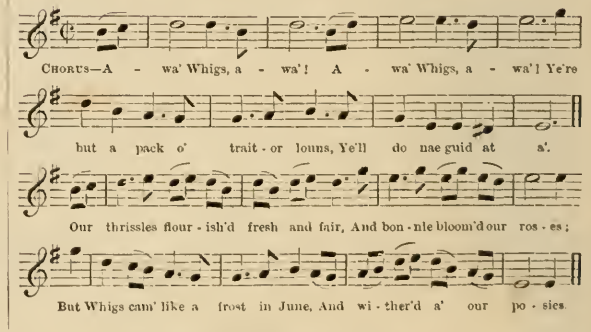
If thou should kiss me, love,
Wha could espy thee?
If thou wad be my love,
Jamie, come try me!
Jamie, come try me, &c.

WHISTLE OWRE THE LAVE O'T.


Slow
Tune—"Whistle owre the lave o't."
First when Mag - gie was my care, Heav'n, I thought, was in her air;
Now we're married—spier nae mair— Whis - tle owre the lave o't.
Meg was meek, and Meg was mild, Bonnie Meg was nature's child;
Wi - ser men than me's beguiled— Whistle owre the lave o't.

How we live, my Meg and me,
How we love, and how we gree,
I care na by how few may see—
Whistle owre the lave o't!
Wha I wish were maggot's meat,
Dish'd up in her winding-sheet,
I could write—but Meg may see 't—
Whistle owre the lave o't!

AWA' WHIGS, AWA'.


Chorus—A - wa' Whigs, a - wa'! A - wa' Whigs, a - wa'! Ye're
but a pack o' trait - or louns, Ye'll do nae guid at a'.
Our thrissles flour - ish'd fresh and fair, And bon - nie bloom'd our ros - es;
But Whigs cam' like a frost in June, And wi - ther'd a' our po - sies.

Our ancient crown 's fa'en in the dust—
Deil blin' them wi' the stoure o't!

KILLIECRANKIE

An' write their names in his black beuk,
Wha gae the Whigs the power o't.
Awa' Whigs, &c.

Our sad decay in church and state
Surpasses my describing:
The Whigs cam' o'er us for a curse,
An' we hae done wi' thriving.
Awa' Whigs, &c.

Grim vengeance lang has taen a nap,
But we may see him waukin':
Guid help the day when Royal heads
Are hunted like a maukin!
Awa' Whigs, &c.

CA' THE YOWES TO THE KNOWES.*

CHORUS.—Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them where the heather grows,
Ca' them where the burnie rowes,
My bonnie dearie.

As I gaed down the water-side,
There I met my shepherd lad:
He row'd me sweetly in his plaid,
An' ca'd me his dearie.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

Will ye gang down the water-side,
And see the waves sae sweetly glide
Beneath the hazels spreading wide?
The moon it shines fu' clearly.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

Ye sall get gowns and ribbons meet,
Cauf-leather shoon upon your feet,
And in my arms thou'lt lie and sleep,
An' aye sall be my dearie.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

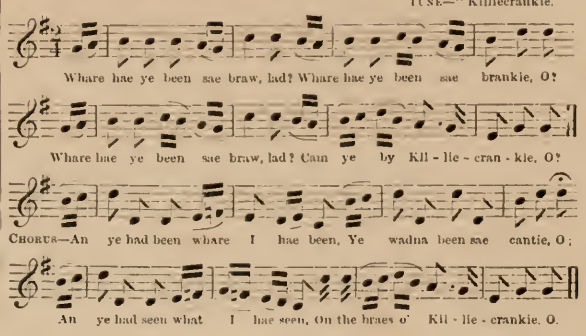
If ye 'll but stand to what ye 've said,
I'se gang wi' thee, my shepherd lad,
And ye may row me in your plaid,
And I sall be your dearie.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

While waters wimple to the sea,
While day blinks in the lift sae hie,
Till clay-cauld death sall blin' my e'e,
Ye sall be my dearie.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

* Burns improved the above song for "Johnson's Museum," but afterwards entirely remodelled it for "Thomson's," only retaining the chorus. For air, see CORRESPONDENCE.

WHARE HAE YE BEEN SAE BRAW, LAD?

TUNE—"Killiecrankie."

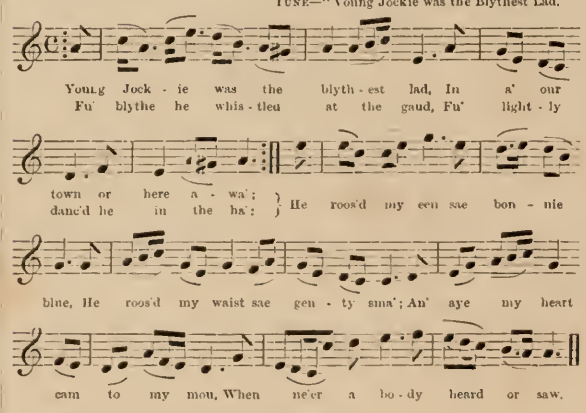

Whare hae ye been sae braw, lad? Whare hae ye been sae brankie, O?
Whare hae ye been sae braw, lad? Cam ye by Kil - lie - cran - kie, O?
CHORUS—An ye had been whare I hae been, Ye wadna been sae cantie, O;
An ye had seen what I hae seen, On the braes o' Kil - lie - crankie, O.

I faught at land, I faught at sea,
At hame I faught my Auntie, O;
But I met the devil an' Dundee,
On the Braes o' Killiecrankie, O.
An ye had been, &c.

The bauld Pitcur fell in a furr,
An' Clavers gat a clankie, O;
Or I had fed an Athole gled,
On the Braes o' Killiecrankie, O.
An ye had been, &c.

YOUNG JOCKIE WAS THE BLYTHEST LAD.

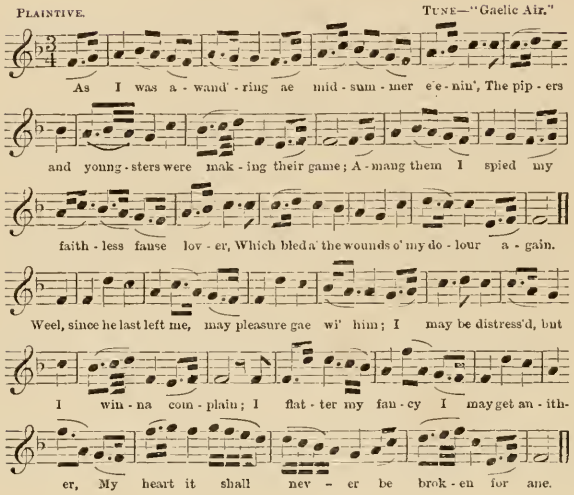
TUNE—"Young Jockie was the blythest Lad."


Young Jock - ie was the blyth - est lad, In a' our
Fu' blythe he whis - tled at the gaud, Fu' light - ly
town or here a - wa';
dane'd he in the ha':
He roos'd my een sae bon - nie
blue, He roos'd my waist sae gen - ty sma'; An' aye my heart
cam to my mou, When ne'er a bo - dy heard or saw.

My Jockie toils upon the plain,
Through wind and weet, through frost and snaw;
And o'er the lea I leuk fu' fain,
When Jockie's owsen hameward ca'.

An' aye the night comes round again,
When in his arms he taks me a';
An' aye he vows he 'll be my ain,
As lang as he has breath to draw.

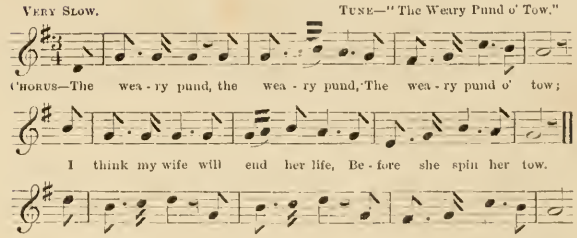
AS I WAS A-WANDERING.

PLAINTIVE. TUNE—"Gaelic Air."

As I was a - wand' - ring ae mid - sum - mer e'e - nin', The pip - ers
and young - sters were mak - ing their game; A - mang them I spied my
faith - less fause lov - er, Which bled a' the wounds o' my do - lour a - gain.
Weel, since he last left me, may pleasure gae wi' him; I may be distress'd, but
I win - na com - plain; I flat - ter my fan - cy I may get an - ith-
er, My heart it shall nev - er be brok - en for ane.

I couldna get sleepin' till dawin' for greetin',
The tears trickled down like the hail and the rain;
Had I na got greetin', my heart wad a broken,
For, oh! love forsaken 's a tormenting pain.
Although he has left me for greed o' the siller,
I didna envy him the gains he can win:
I rather wad bear a' the lade o' my sorrow,
Than ever hae acted sae faithless to him.

THE WEARY PUND O' TOW.

VERY SLOW. TUNE—"The Weary Pund o' Tow."


CHORUS—The wea - ry pund, the wea - ry pund, The wea - ry pund o' tow;
I think my wife will end her life, Be - fore she spin her tow.
I bought my wife a stane o' lint, As guid as e'er did grow,
And a' that she has made o' that Is ae puir pund o' tow.

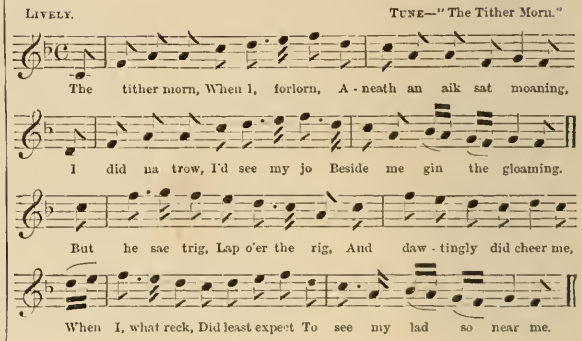
There sat a bottle in a bole,
Ayont the ingle low;
And aye she took the tither souk,
To drouk the stourie tow.
The weary pund, &c.

Quoth I, for shame, ye dirty dame,
Gae spin your tap o' tow!
She took the rock, and wi' a knock,
She brake it o'er my pow.
The weary pund, &c.

At last her feet—I sang to see 't!
Gaed foremost o'er the knowe,
And or I wad anither jad,
I 'll wallop in a tow.
The weary pund, &c.

THE TITHER MORN.

LIVELY. TUNE—"The Tither Morn."


The tither morn, When I, forlorn, A - neath an aik sat moaning,
I did na trow, I'd see my jo Beside me gin the gloaming.
But he sae trig, Lap o'er the rig, And daw - tingly did cheer me,
When I, what reck, Did least expect To see my lad so near me.

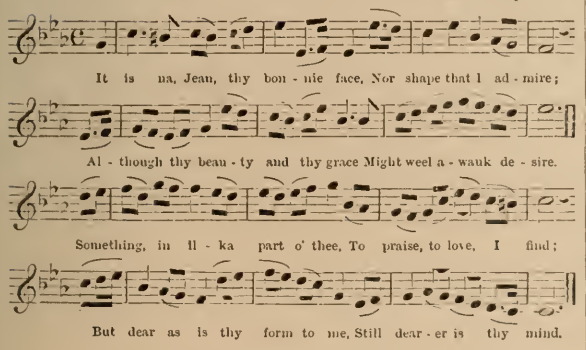
His bonnet he, a thought ajee,
Cock'd sprush when first he clasp'd me;
And I, I wat, wi' fainness grat,
While in his grips he press'd me.
Deil tak the war! I late and air
Hae wish'd since Jock departed;
But now as glad I 'm wi' my lad,
As short syne broken-hearted.

Fu' aft at e'en wi' dancing keen,
When a' were blythe and merry,
I cared na by, sae sad was I,
In absence o' my dearie.
But, praise be blest, my mind 's at rest,
I 'm happy wi' my Johnnie:
At kirk and fair I 'se aye be there,
And be as canty 's ony.

THEN GUIDWIFE COUNT THE LAWIN.

IT IS NA, JEAN, THY BONNIE FACE.

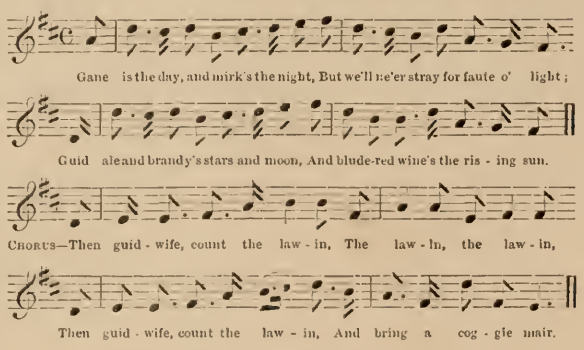
TUNE—"The Maid's Complaint."


It is na, Jean, thy bon - nie face, Nor shape that I ad - mire;
Al - though thy beau - ty and thy grace Might weel a - wauk de - sire.
Something, in ll - ka part o' thee, To praise, to love, I find;
But dear as is thy form to me, Still dear - er is thy mind.

Nae mair ungenerous wish I hae,
Nor stronger in my breast,
Than, if I canna mak' thee sae,
At least to see thee blest.
Content am I, if Heaven shall give
But happiness to thee;
And as wi' thee I 'd wish to live,
For thee I 'd bear to die.

GUIDWIFE, COUNT THE LAWIN.

LIVELY. TUNE—"Guidwife, Count the Lawin."

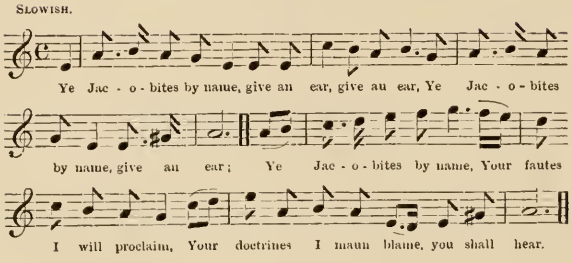

Gane is the day, and mirk's the night, But we'll ne'er stray for faute o' light;
Guid ale and brandy's stars and moon, And blude-red wine's the ris - ing sun.
CHORUS—Then guid - wife, count the law - in, The law - in, the law - in,
Then guid - wife, count the law - in, And bring a cog - gie mair.

There 's wealth and ease for gentlemen,
And simple folk maun fecht and fen';
But here we 're a' in ae accord,
For ilka man that 's drunk 's a lord.
Then guidwife, &c.

My coggie is a haly pool
That heals the wounds o' care and dool;

And Pleasure is a wanton trout,
An ye drink it a', ye 'll find him out.
Then guidwife, &c.

YE JACOBITES BY NAME.

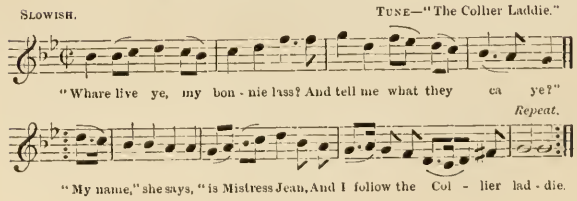

Slowish.
Ye Jac - o - bites by name, give an ear, give an ear, Ye Jac - o - bites
by name, give an ear; Ye Jac - o - bites by name, Your fautes
I will proclaim, Your doctrines I maun blame, you shall hear.

What is Right, and what is Wrang, by the law, by the law?
What is Right, and what is Wrang, by the law?
What is Right, and what is Wrang?
A short sword, and a lang,
A weak arm and a strang, for to draw.

What makes heroic strife, famed afar, famed afar?
What makes heroic strife famed afar?
What makes heroic strife?
To whet th' assassin's knife,
Or hunt a Parent's life, wi' bluidie war?

Then let your schemes alone, in the state, in the state;
Then let your schemes alone, in the state;
Then let your schemes alone,
Adore the rising sun,
And leave a man undone, to his fate.

MY COLLIER LADDIE.


Slowish.
Tune—"The Collier Laddie."
"Whare live ye, my bon - nie lass? And tell me what they ca ye?"
Repeat.
"My name," she says, "is Mistress Jean, And I follow the Col - lier lad - die.

See you not yon hills and dales
The sun shines on sae brawlie;
They a' are mine, and they shall be thine,
Gin ye 'll leave your Collier laddie.
They a' are mine, &c.

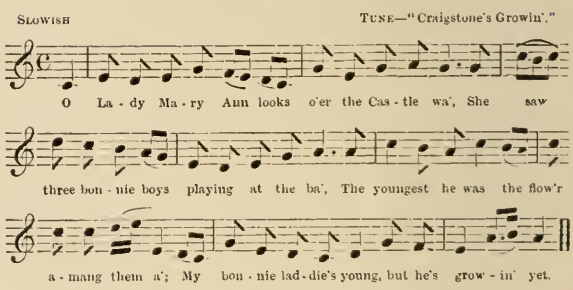
Ye shall gang in gay attire,
Weel buskit up sae gaudy;
And ane to wait on every hand,
Gin ye 'll leave your Collier laddie.
And ane to wait, &c.

Though ye had a' the sun shines on,
And the earth conceals sae lowly,
I wad turn my back on you and it a',
And embrace my Collier laddie.
I wad turn my back, &c.

I can win my five pennies in a day,
An' spend it at night fu' brawlie;
And make my bed in the collier's neuk,
And lie down wi' my Collier laddie.
And make my bed, &c.

Luve for luve is the bargain for me,
Though the wee cot-house should haud me;
And the warld before me to win my bread,
And fair fa' my Collier laddie!
And the warld before me, &c.

LADY MARY ANN.


Slowish
Tune—"Craigstone's Growin'."
O La - dy Ma - ry Ann looks o'er the Cas - tle wa', She saw
three bon - nie boys playing at the ba', The youngest he was the flow'r
a - mang them a'; My bon - nie lad - die's young, but he's grow - in' yet.

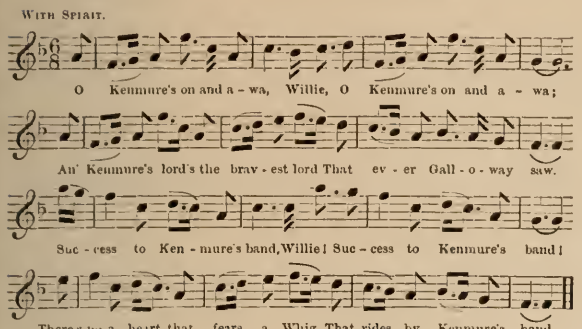
O father, O father, an ye think it fit,
We 'll send him a year to the college yet;
We 'll sew a green ribbon round about his hat,
And that will let them ken he 's to marry yet.

Lady Mary Ann was a flower in the dew,
Sweet was its smell and bonnie was its hue,
And the longer it blossom'd the sweeter it grew;
For the lily in the bud will be bonnier yet.

Young Charlie Cochran was the sprout of an aik,
Bonnie and bloomin' and straight was its make:
The sun took delight to shine for its sake,
And it will be the brag o' the forest yet.

The simmer is gane when the leaves they were green,
And the days are awa' that we hae seen,
But far better days I trust will come again;
For my bonnie laddie 's young, but he 's growin' yet.

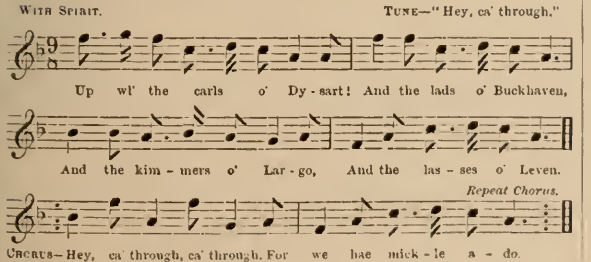
O KENMURE 'S ON AND AWA, WILLIE.


With Spirit.
O Kenmure's on and a - wa, Willie, O Kenmure's on and a - wa;
An' Kenmure's lord's the brav - est lord That ev - er Gall - o - way saw.
Suc - cess to Ken - mure's band, Willie! Suc - cess to Kenmure's band!
There's no a heart that fears a Whig, That rides by Kenmure's hand.

Here 's Kenmure's health in wine, Willie!
Here 's Kenmure's health in wine!
There 's ne'er a coward o' Kenmure's blude,
Nor yet o' Gordon's line.
O Kenmure's lads are men, Willie,
O Kenmure's lads are men;
Their hearts and swords are metal true,
And that their foes shall ken.

They 'll live or die wi' fame, Willie,
They 'll live or die wi' fame;
But sune, wi' sounding victorie,
May Kenmure's lord come hame!
Here 's him that 's far awa, Willie!
Here 's him that 's far awa!
And here 's the flower that I loe best,
The rose that 's like the snaw.

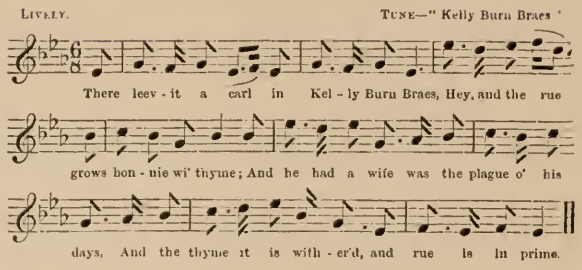
BOAT SONG—HEY, CA' THROUGH.


With Spirit.
Tune—"Hey, ca' through."
Up wi' the carls o' Dy - sart! And the lads o' Buckhaven,
And the kim - mers o' Lar - go, And the las - ses o' Leven.
Repeat Chorus.
Chorus—Hey, ca' through, ca' through, For we hae mick - le a - do.

We hae tales to tell,
An' we hae sangs to sing;
We hae pennies to spend,
An' we hae pints to bring.
Hey, ca' through, &c.

We 'll live a' our days,
And them that comes behin',
Let them do the like,
An' spend the gear they win.
Hey, ca' through, &c.

KELLY BURN BRAES.


Lively.
Tune—"Kelly Burn Braes."
There leev - it a carl in Kel - ly Burn Braes, Hey, and the rue
grows bon - nie wi' thyme; And he had a wife was the plague o' his
days, And the thyme it is with - er'd, and rue is in prime.

Ae day as the carl gaed up the lang glen,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme:
He met wi' the Deil, wha said, "How do you fen?'
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

"I 've got a bad wife, sir, that 's a' my complaint,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
For, saving your presence, to her ye 're a saint,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime."

"It 's neither your stot nor your staig I shall crave,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
But gie me your wife, man, for her I must have,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime."

"O welcome most kindly!" the blythe carl said,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
But if ye can match her ye 're waur than ye 're ca'd,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime."

The Devil has got the auld wife on his back,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
And like a poor pedlar he 's carried his pack,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

He 's carried her hame to his ain hallan door,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
Syne bade her gae in for a b—, and a w—,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

Then straight he makes fifty, the pick o' his band,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
Turn out on her guard in the clap o' a hand,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

The earlin gaed through them like ony wud bear,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
Whae'er she gat hands on cam' ne'er her nae mair,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

A reekit we deevil looks over the wa',
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
"O help, maister, help, or she 'll ruin us a!"
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

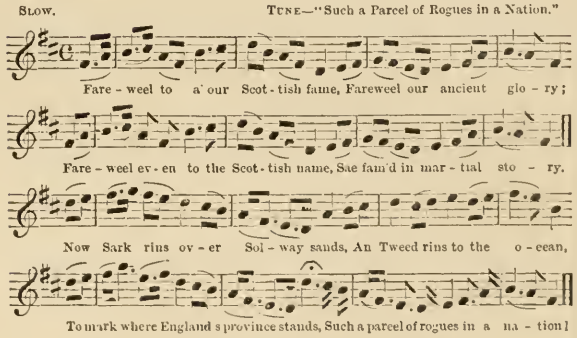
The Devil he swore by the edge o' his knife,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
He pitied the man that was tied to a wife,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

The Devil he swore by the kirk and the bell,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
He was not in wedlock, thank Heav'n, but in hell,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

Then Satan has travell'd again wi' his pack,
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
And to her auld husband he 's carried her back,
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

"I hae been a Deevil the feck o' my life,"
Hey, and the rue grows bonnie wi' thyme;
"But ne'er was in hell till I met wi' a wife,"
And the thyme it is wither'd, and rue is in prime.

SUCH A PARCEL OF ROGUES IN A NATION.


Slow.
Tune—"Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation."
Fare - weel to a' our Scot - tish fame, Fareweel our ancient glo - ry;
Fare - weel ev - en to the Scot - tish name, Sae fam'd in mar - tial sto - ry.
Now Sark rins ov - er Sol - way sands, An Tweed rins to the o - cean,
To mark where England's province stands, Such a parcel of rogues in a na - tion!

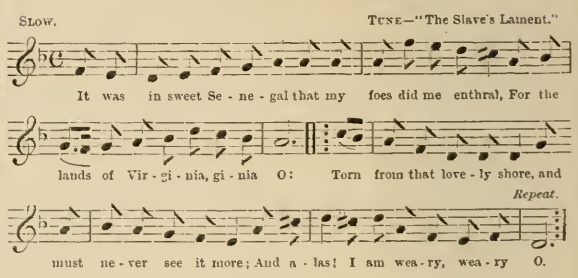
What force or guile could not subdue,
Through many warlike ages,
Is wrought now by a coward few,
For hireling traitor's wages.
The English steel we could disdain,
Secure in valour's station;
But English gold has been our bane—
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

O would, ere I had seen the day
That Treason thus could sell us,
My auld grey head had lien in clay,
Wi' Bruce and loyal Wallace!
But pith and power, till my last hour,
I 'll mak this declaration;
We 're bought and sold for English gold—
Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

JOCKY FOU AND JENNY FAIN.

. . . . . .

Let love sparkle in her ee,
Let her loe nae man but me;
That 's the tocher guid I prize,
There the lover's treasure lies.*

THE SLAVE'S LAMENT.

Slow.
Tune—"The Slave's Lament."
It was in sweet Se - ne - gal that my foes did me enthral, For the
lands of Vir - gi - nia, gi - nia O: Torn from that love - ly shore, and
Repeat.
must ne - ver see it more; And a - las! I am wea - ry, wea - ry O.

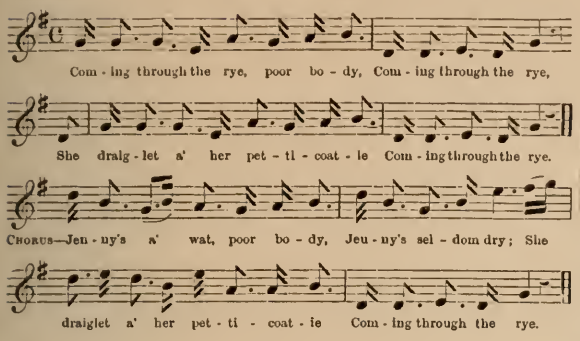
All on that charming coast is no bitter snow and frost,
Like the lands of Virginia, ginia O:
There streams for ever flow, and the flowers for ever blow
And alas! I am weary, weary O:
There streams for ever flow, and flowers for ever blow,
And alas! I am weary, weary, O.

The burden I must bear, while the cruel scourge I fear,
In the lands of Virginia, ginia O;
And I think on friends most dear, with the bitter, bitter tear,
And alas! I am weary, weary O:
And I think on friends most dear, with the bitter, bitter tear,
And alas! I am weary, weary O.

* The above verse was thrown by Burns into a song by Ramsay.

COMING THROUGH THE RYE.

VERY SLOW. TUNE—"Coming Through the Rye."

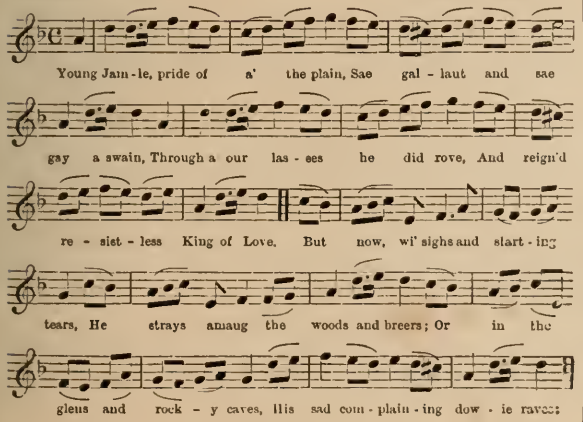

Com - ing through the rye, poor bo - dy, Com - ing through the rye,
She draig - let a' her pet - ti - coat - ie Com - ing through the rye.
CHORUS—Jen - ny's a' wat, poor bo - dy, Jen - ny's sel - dom dry; She
draiglet a' her pet - ti - coat - ie Com - ing through the rye.

Gin a body meet a body
Coming through the rye,
Gin a body kiss a body,
Need a body cry?
Jenny 's a' wat, &c.

Gin a body meet a body
Coming through the glen,
Gin a body kiss a body,
Need the world ken?
Jenny 's a' wat, &c.

YOUNG JAMIE, PRIDE OF A' THE PLAIN.

SLOWISH. "The Carlin o the Glen."

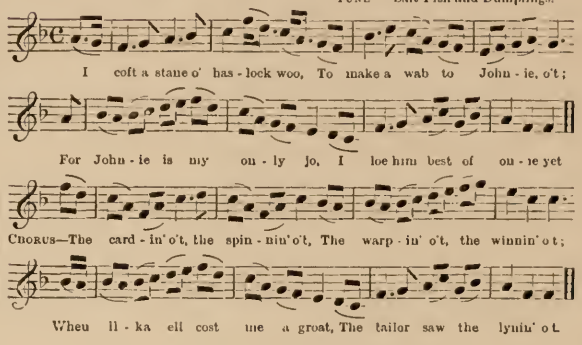

Young Jam - ie, pride of a' the plain, Sae gal - laut and sae
gay a swain, Through a our las - ses he did rove, And reign'd
re - sist - less King of Love. But now, wi' sighs and start - ing
tears, He strays amang the woods and breers; Or in the
gleus and rock - y caves, His sad com - plain - ing dow - ie raves:

"I wha sae late did range and rove,
And changed with every moon my love,
I little thought the time was near,
Repentance I should buy sae dear.

"The slighted maids my torments see,
And laugh at a' the pangs I dree;
While she, my cruel, scornful Fair,
Forbids me e'er to see her mair."

THE CARDIN' O'T, THE SPINNIN' O'T.

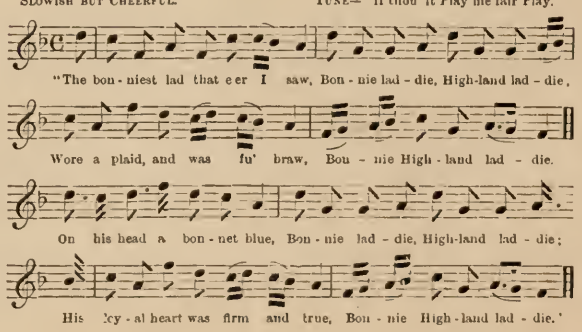
TUNE—"Salt Fish and Dumplings."


I coft a stane o' has - lock woo, To make a wab to John - ie, o't;
For John - ie is my on - ly jo, I loe him best of on - ie yet
CHORUS—The card - in' o't, the spin - nin' o't, The warp - in' o't, the winnin' o't;
Whenill - ka ell cost me a groat, The tailor saw the lynin' o't.

For though his locks be lyart grey,
And though his brow be beld aboon;
Yet I hae seen him on a day,
The pride of a' the parishen.
The cardin' o't, &c.

THE HIGHLAND LADDIE.

SLOWISH BUT CHEERFUL. TUNE—"If thou lt Play me fair Play."


"The bon - niest lad that e er I saw, Bon - nie lad - die, High-land lad - die,
Wore a plaid, and was fu' braw, Bon - nie High - land lad - die.
On his head a bon - net blue, Bon - nie lad - die, High-land lad - die;
His ley - al heart was firm and true, Bon - nie High - land lad - die."

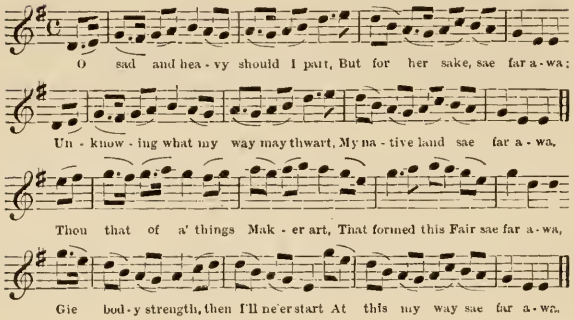
Trumpets sound, and cannons roar,
Bonnie lassie, Lowland lassie;
And a' the hills wi' echoes roar,
Bonnie Lowland lassie.

Glory, honour, now invite,
Bonnie lassie, Lowland lassie,
For freedom and my king to fight,
Bonnie Lowland lassie."

"The sun a backward course shall take,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie,
Ere aught thy manly courage shake,
Bonnie Highland laddie.
Go! for yourself procure renown,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie;
And for your lawful king, his crown,
Bonnie Highland laddie."

MY NATIVE LAND SAE FAR AWA.

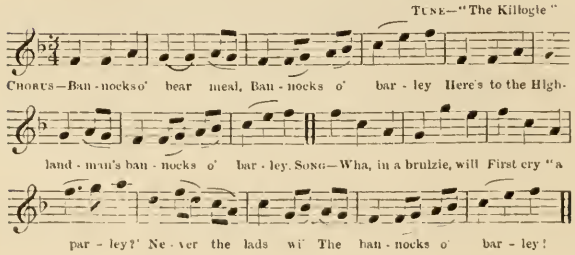
TUNE—"Dalkeith Maiden Bridge."


O sad and hea - vy should I part, But for her sake, sae far a - wa;
Un - know - ing what my way may thwart, My na - tive land sae far a - wa.
Thou that of a' things Mak - er art, That formed this Fair sae far a - wa,
Gie bod - y strength, then I'll ne'er start At this my way sae far a - wa.

How true is love to pure desert!
Like mine for her sae far awa';
And nocht shall heal my bosom's smart,
While, oh, she is sae far awa!
Nane other love, nane other dart,
I feel but her's sae far awa;
But fairer never touch'd a heart
Than her's, the Fair, sae far awa.

BANNOCKS O' BEAR MEAL.

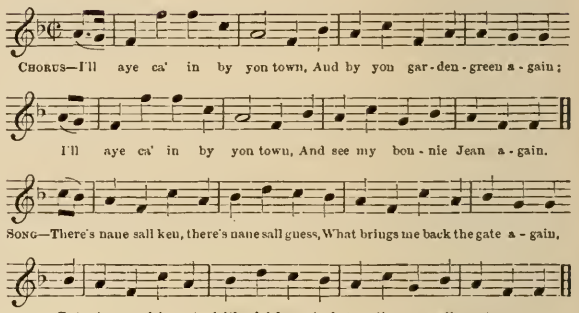
TUNE—"The Killogie."


CHORUS—Ban - nocks o' bear meal, Ban - nocks o' bar - ley Here's to the High-
land - man's ban - nocks o' bar - ley. SONG—Wha, in a brulzie, will First cry "a
par - ley?' Ne - ver the lads wi' The ban - nocks o' bar - ley!

Wha, in his wae days,
Were loyal to Charlie?
Wha but the lads wi' the
Bannocks o' barley!
Bannocks o' bear meal, &c.

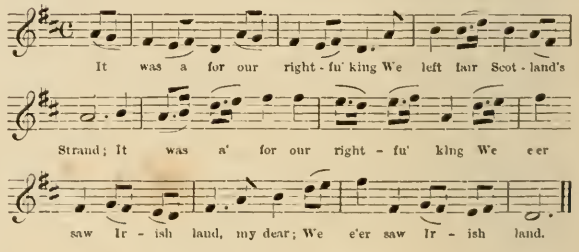
I 'LL AYE CA' IN BY YON TOWN.

LIVELY. TUNE—"I 'll Gang nae Mair to yon Town."


CHORUS—I'll aye ca' in by yon town, And by yon gar - den - green a - gain;
I'll aye ca' in by yon town, And see my bon - nie Jean a - gain.
SONG—There's naue sall ken, there's naue sall guess, What brings me back the gate a - gain,
But she, my fair - est faith - fu' lass, And stow - lins we sall meet a - gain.

She 'll wander by the aiken tree,
When trystin' time draws near again;
And when her lovely form I see,
O haith! she's doubly dear again.
I 'll aye ca' in, &c.

IT WAS A' FOR OUR RIGHTFU' KING.

TUNE—"It was a' for our Rightfu' King."

It was a for our right - fu' king We left fair Scot - land's
Strand; It was a' for our right - fu' king We e'er
saw Ir - ish land, my dear; We e'er saw Ir - ish land.

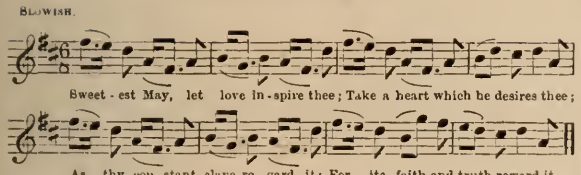
Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain;
My Love and Native Land fareweel,
For I maun cross the main, my dear,
For I maun cross the main.

He turn'd him right and round about,
Upon the Irish shore;
And gae his bridle reins a shake,
With adieu for evermore, my dear,
And adieu for evermore.

The soger frae the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main;
And I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again, my dear.
Never to meet again.

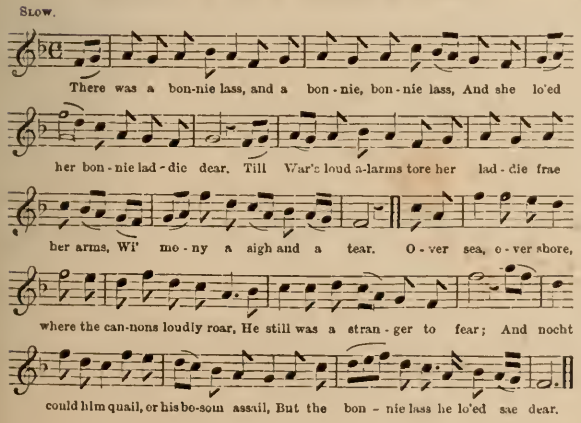
When day is gane, and night is come,
And a' folk bound to sleep;
I think on him that 's far awa,
The lee-lang night and weep, my dear,
The lee-lang night and weep.

SWEETEST MAY.

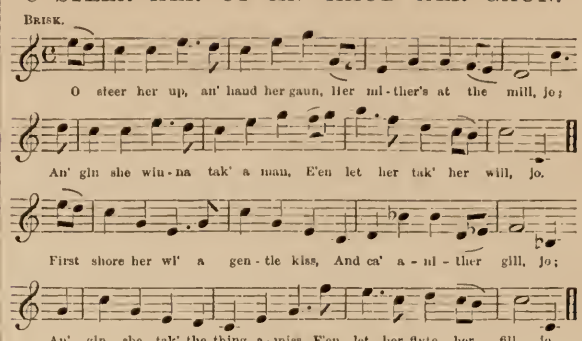

BLOWISH.
Sweet - est May, let love in - spire thee; Take a heart which he desires thee;
As thy con - stant slave re - gard it; For its faith and truth reward it.

Proof o' shot to birth or money,
Not the wealthy, but the bonnie,
Not high-born, but noble-minded,
In love's silken bands can bind it!

THERE WAS A BONNIE LASS.

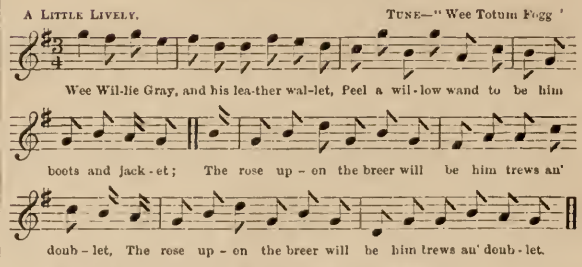

SLOW.
There was a bon-nie lass, and a bon - nie, bon - nie lass, And she lo'ed
her bon - nie lad - die dear. Till War's loud a-larms tore her lad - die frae
her arms, Wi' mo - ny a sigh and a tear. O - ver sea, o - ver shore,
where the can-nons loudly roar, He still was a stran - ger to fear; And nocht
could him quail, or his bo-som assail, But the bon - nie lass he lo'ed sae dear.

O STEER HER UP AN' HAUD HER GAUN.


BRISK.
O steer her up, an' haud her gaun, Her mi - ther's at the mill, jo;
An' gin she win - na tak' a man, E'en let her tak' her will, jo.
First shore her wi' a gen - tle kiss, And ca' a - wi - ther gill, jo;
An' gin she tak' the thing a - miss, E'en let her flyte her fill, jo.

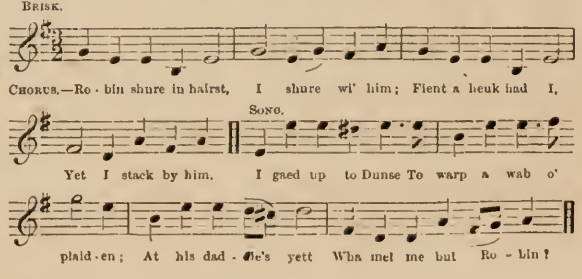
O steer her up, and be na blate,
An' gin she tak' it ill, jo,
Then leave the lassie till her fate,
And time nae langer spill, jo:
Ne'er break your heart for ae rebute,
But think upon it still, jo,
That gin the lassie winna do 't,
Ye 'll find anither will, jo.

WEE WILLIE GRAY.


A LITTLE LIVELY.
TUNE—"Wee Totum Fogg"
Wee Wil-lie Gray, and his lea-ther wal-let, Peel a wil - low wand to be him
boots and jack - et; The rose up - on the breer will be him trews an'
doub - let, The rose up - on the breer will be him trews an' doub - let.

Wee Willie Gray, and his leather wallet,
Twice a lily-flower will be him sark and cravat;
Feathers of a flee wad feather up his bonnet,
Feathers of a flee wad feather up his bonnet.

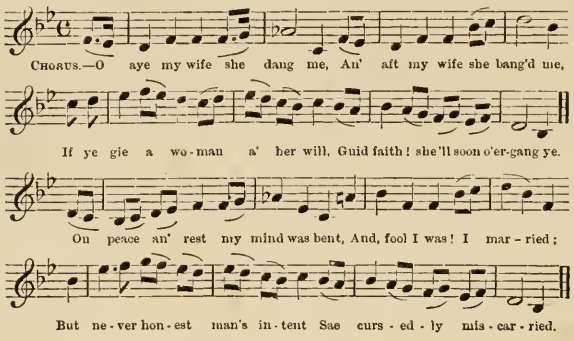
ROBIN SHURE IN HAIRST.


BRISK.
CHORUS.—Ro - bin shure in hairst, I shure wi' him; Fient a heuk had I,
SONG.
Yet I stack by him. I gaed up to Dunse To warp a wab o'
plaid - en; At his dad - die's yett Wha met me but Ro - bin?

Was na Robin bauld,
Though I was a cottar,
Play'd me sic a trick,
An' me the Eller's dochter!
Robin shure, &c.

Robin promis'd me
A' my winter vittle;
Fient haet he had but three
Guse-feathers and a whittle!
Robin shure, &c.

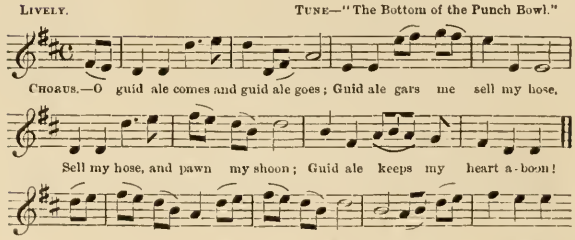
O AYE MY WIFE SHE DANG ME.

A Little Lively. Tune—"My Wife she Dang Me."

Chorus.—O aye my wife she dang me, An' aft my wife she bang'd me,
If ye gie a wo-man a' her will, Guid faith! she'll soon o'er-gang ye.
On peace an' rest my mind was bent, And, fool I was! I mar-ried;
But ne-ver hon-est man's in-tent Sae curs-ed-ly mis-car-ried.

Some sairie comfort at the last,
When a' thir days are done, man,
My "pains o' hell" on earth is past,
I 'm sure o' bliss aboon, man.
O aye my wife, &c.

O GUID ALE COMES.

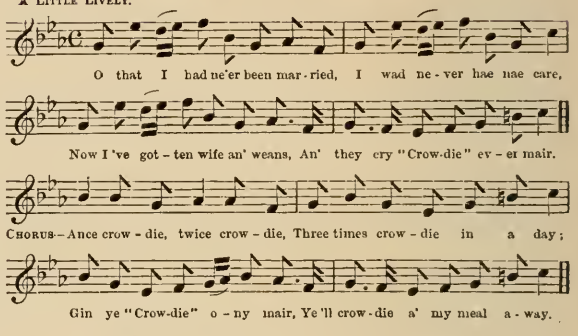
Lively. Tune—"The Bottom of the Punch Bowl."


Chorus.—O guid ale comes and guid ale goes; Guid ale gars me sell my hose,
Sell my hose, and pawn my shoon; Guid ale keeps my heart a-boon!
Sono.—I had sax ow-sen in a pleugh, And they drew a' weel eneugh:
I sell'd them a' just ane by ane; Guid ale keeps the heart a-boon!

Guid ale hauds me bare and busy,
Gars me moop wi' the servant hizzie,
Stand i' the stool when I hae dune—
Guid ale keeps the heart aboon!
O guid ale comes, &c.

CROWDIE EVER MAIR.

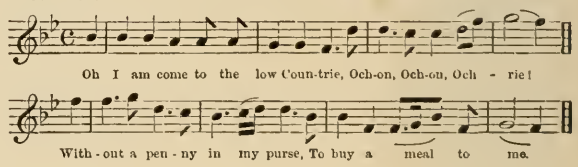
A Little Lively.


O that I had ne'er been mar-ried, I wad ne-ver hae nae care,
Now I 've got-ten wife an' weans, An' they cry "Crow-die" ev-er mair.
Chorus—Ance crow-die, twice crow-die, Three times crow-die in a day;
Gin ye "Crow-die" o-ny mair, Ye 'll crow-die a' my meal a-way.

Waefu' Want and Hunger fley me,
Glowrin' by the hallan en';
Sair I fecht them at the door,
But aye I 'm eerie they come ben.
Ance crowdie, &c.

THE HIGHLAND WIDOW'S LAMENT.

Very Slow. Tune—"Gaelic Air."



It was na sae in the Highland hills,
Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
Nae woman in the Country wide,
Sae happy was as me.

For then I had a score o' kye,
Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
Feeding on yon hill sae high,
And giving milk to me.

And there I had three score o' yowes,
Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
Skipping on yon bonnie knowes,
And casting woo to me.

I was the happiest of a' the Clan,
Sair, sair may I repine;
For Donald was the brawest man,
And Donald he was mine.

Till Charlie Stewart cam at last,
Sae far to set us free;
My Donald's arm was wanted then,
For Scotland and for me.

Their waefu' fate what need I tell,
Right to the wrang did yield;
My Donald and his Country fell,
Upon Culloden field.

Ochon! O Donald, oh!
Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
Nae woman in the warld wide,
Sae wretched now as me.

DOUBTFULLY ATTRIBUTED TO BURNS.

ON PASTORAL POETRY.

Hail, Poesie! thou Nymph reserved,
In chase o' thee, what crowds hae swerved
Frae common-sense, or sunk ennerved
'Mang heaps o' clavers;
And och! owre aft thy joes hae starved,
Mid a' thy favours!

Say, Lassie, why thy train amang,
While loud, the trump's heroic clang,
And sock or buskin skelp alang
To death or marriage;
Scarce ane has tried the shepherd-sang
But wi' miscarriage?

In Homer's craft Jock Milton thrives;
Æschylus' pen Will Shakspeare drives;
Wee Pope, the knurlin', 'till him rives
Horatian fame;
In thy sweet sang, Barbauld, survives
E'en Sappho's flame.

But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?
They 're no herd's ballats, Maro's catches;
Squire Pope but busks his skinklin' patches
O' heathen tatters:
I pass by hundreds, nameless wretches,
That ape their betters.

In this braw age o' wit and lear,
Will nane the Shepherd's whistle mair
Blaw sweetly in its native air
And rural grace;
And wi' the far-famed Grecian share
A rival place?

Yes, there is ane, a Scottish callan—
There 's ane; come forrit, honest Allan!
Thou need na jouk behint the hallan,
A chiel sae clever;
The teeth o' time may gnaw Tantallan,
But thou 's for ever!

Thou paints auld nature to the nines,
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;
Nae gowden stream through myrtles twines,
Where Philomel,
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,
Her griefs will tell!

In gowany glens the burnie strays,
Where bonnie lassies bleach their claes;
Or trots by hazelly shaws and braes,
Wi' hawthorns grey,
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays
At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are nature's sel';
Nae bombast spates o' nonsense swell;
Nae snap conceits, but that sweet spell
O' witchin' love;
That charm that can the strongest quell,
The sternest move.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH THOMSON:

INCLUDING THE

SONGS CONTRIBUTED TO THOMSON'S COLLECTION.

No. I.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *September*, 1792.

SIR,

FOR some years past I have, with a friend or two, employed many leisure hours in selecting and collating the most favourite of our national melodies for publication. We have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air, the better to fit them for concerts, both public and private. To render this work perfect, we are desirous to have the poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so in many instances is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. The editors of these seem in general to have depended on the music proving an excuse for the verses; and hence some charming melodies are united to mere nonsense and doggerel, while others are accommodated with rhymes so loose and indelicate as cannot be sung in decent company. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" and, for the honour of Caledonia, I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen. If so, we shall be enabled to present the public with a collection infinitely more interesting than any that has yet appeared, and acceptable to all persons of taste, whether they wish for correct melodies, delicate accompaniments, or characteristic verses. We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any reasonable price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication. Tell me frankly, then, whether you will devote your leisure to writing twenty or twenty-five songs suited to the particular melodies which I am prepared to send you. A few songs, exceptionable only in some of their verses, I will likewise submit to your consideration; leaving it to you, either to mend these, or make new songs in their stead. It is superfluous to assure you that I have no intention to displace any of the sterling old songs; those only will be removed which appear quite silly or absolutely indecent. Even these shall all be examined by Mr. Burns, and if he is of opinion that any of them are deserving of the music, in such case no divorce shall take place.

Relying on the letter accompanying this, to be forgiven for the liberty I have taken in addressing you, I am, with great esteem, Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

G. THOMSON.

No. II.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

DUMFRIES, 16*th September*, 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE just this moment got your letter. As the request you make to me will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have, strained to their utmost exertion by the impulse of enthusiasm. Only, don't hurry me: "Deil tak' the hindmost" is by no means the *cri de guerre* of my muse. Will you, as I am inferior to none of you in enthusiastic attachment to the poetry and music of old Caledonia, and,

since you request it, have cheerfully promised my mite of assistance—will you let me have a list of your airs, with the first line of the printed verses you intend for them, that I may have an opportunity of suggesting any alteration that may occur to me? You know 'tis in the way of my trade; still leaving you, gentlemen, the undoubted right of publishers, to approve or reject, at your pleasure, for your own publication. Apropos! if you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad, or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed at least a sprinkling of our native tongue. English verses, particularly the works of Scotsmen, that have merit, are certainly very eligible. "Tweedside;" "Ah! the poor shepherd's mournful fate!" "Ah! Chloris, could I now but sit," &c., you cannot mend; but such insipid stuff as "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c., usually set to "The Mill, Mill O," is a disgrace to the collections in which it has already appeared, and would doubly disgrace a collection that will have the very superior merit of yours. But more of this in the farther prosecution of the business, if I am called on for my strictures and amendments—I say, amendments; for I will not alter except where I myself at least think that I amend.

As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright prostitution of soul! A proof of each of the songs that I compose or amend, I shall receive as a favour. In the rustic phrase of the season, "Gude speed the wark!"

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. BURNS.

P.S.—I have some particular reasons for wishing my interference to be known as little as possible.

No. III.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 13*th October*, 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED with much satisfaction your pleasant and obliging letter, and I return my warmest acknowledgments for the enthusiasm with which you have entered into our undertaking. We have now no doubt of being able to produce a collection highly deserving of public attention in all respects.

I agree with you in thinking English verses, that have merit, very eligible, wherever new verses are necessary; because the English becomes every year more and more the language of Scotland; but if you mean that no English verses, except those by Scottish authors, ought to be admitted, I am half inclined to differ from you. I should consider it unpardonable to sacrifice one good song in the Scottish dialect, to make room for English verses; but if we can select a few excellent ones, suited to the unprovided or ill-provided airs, would it not be the very bigotry of literary patriotism to reject such, merely because the authors were born south of the Tweed? Our sweet air, "My Nannie O," which in the collections is joined to the poorest stuff that Allan Ramsay ever wrote, beginning, "While some for pleasure pawn their health," answers so finely to Dr. Percy's beautiful song, "O Nancy, wilt thou go with me," that one would think he wrote it on purpose for the air. However, it is not at all our wish to confine you to English verses; you shall freely be allowed a sprinkling of your native tongue, as you elegantly express it; and moreover, we will patiently wait your own time. One thing only I beg, which is, that however gay and sportive the muse may be, she may always be decent. Let her not write what beauty would blush to speak, nor wound that charming delicacy which forms the most precious dowry of our daughters. I do not conceive the song to be the most proper vehicle for witty and brilliant conceits; simplicity, I believe, should be its prominent feature; but in some of our songs the writers have confounded simplicity with coarseness and vulgarity; although between the one and the other, as Dr. Beattie well observes, there is as great a difference as between a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags. The humorous ballad, or pathetic complaint, is best suited to our artless melodies; and more interesting, indeed, in all songs, than the most pointed wit, dazzling descriptions, and flowery fancies.

With these trite observations I send you eleven of the songs, for which it is my wish to substitute others of your writing. I shall soon transmit the rest, and at the same time, a prospectus of the whole collection: and you may believe we will receive any hints that you are so kind as to give for improving the work, with the greatest pleasure and thankfulness.

I remain, dear Sir, &c.

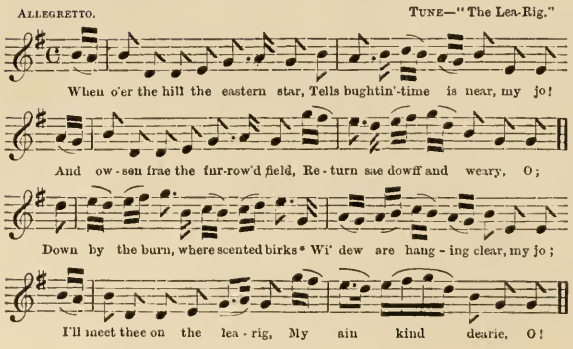
No. IV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

LET me tell you that you are too fastidious in your ideas of songs and ballads. I own that your criticisms are just; the songs you specify in your list have, all but

one, the faults you remark in them; but who shall mend the matter? Who shall rise up and say—Go to, I will make a better? For instance. on reading over the "Lea-rig," I immediately set about trying my hand on it, and after all, I could make nothing more of it than the following, which, Heaven knows, is poor enough:—

MY AIN KIND DEARIE, O.

ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"The Lea-Rig."
When o'er the hill the eastern star, Tells bughtin'-time is near, my jo!
And ow-sen frae the fur-row'd field, Re-turn sae dowff and weary, O;
Down by the burn, where scented birks* Wi' dew are hang-ing clear, my jo;
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig, My ain kind dearie, O!

In mirkest glen at midnight hour,
I 'd rove and ne'er be eerie, O,
If through that glen I gaed to thee,
My ain kind dearie, O.

* MS. variation:—

"Down by the burn where birken-buds."

Although the night were ne'er sae wild,†
And I were ne'er sae wearie, O,
I 'd meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O! ‡

Your observation, as to the aptitude of Dr. Percy's

† "In the copy transmitted to Mr. Thomson, instead of *wild*, was inserted *wet*. But in one of the manuscripts, probably written afterwards, wet was changed into wild—evidently a great improvement. The lovers might meet on the lea-rig, 'although the night were ne'er so *wild;*' that is, although the summer-wind blew, the sky lowered, and the thunder murmured: such circumstances might render their meeting still more interesting. But if the night were actually wet, why should they meet on the lea-rig? On a wet night the imagination cannot contemplate their situation there with any complacency. Tibullus, and after him Hammond, has conceived a happier situation for lovers on a wet night. Probably Burns had in his mind the verse of an old Scottish Song, in which *wet* and *weary* are naturally enough conjoined:—

'When my ploughman comes hame at e'en
He 's often wet and weary;
Cast aff the wet, put on the dry,
And gae to bed, my deary.'"—CURRIE.

‡ At the suggestion of Mr. Thomson, Burns added another stanza to this song—see Letter No. VIII.

ballad on the air "Nannie O," is just. It is, besides, perhaps the most beautiful ballad in the English language. But let me remark to you that, in the sentiment and style of our Scottish airs, there is a pastoral simplicity, a something that one may call the Doric style and dialect of vocal music, to which a dash of our native tongue and manners is particularly, nay peculiarly, apposite. For this reason, and, upon my honour, for this reason alone, I am of opinion (but, as I have told you before, my opinion is yours, freely yours, to approve or reject as you please) that my ballad of "Nannie O" might, perhaps, do for one set of verses to the tune. Now don't let it enter into your head that you are under any necessity of taking my verses. I have long ago made up my mind as to my own reputation in the business of authorship; and have nothing to be pleased or offended at in your adoption or rejection of my verses. Though you should reject one half of what I give you, I shall be pleased with your adopting the other half, and shall continue to serve you with the same assiduity.

In the printed copy of my "Nannie O," the name of the river is horridly prosaic. I will alter it,

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows."

Girvan is the name of the river that suits the idea of the stanza best, but Lugar* is the most agreeable modulation of syllables.

I will soon give you a great many more remarks on this business; but I have just now an opportunity of conveying you this scrawl free of postage, an expense that it is ill able to pay: so, with my best compliments to honest Allan, Guid be wi' ye, &c.

FRIDAY NIGHT.

SATURDAY MORNING.

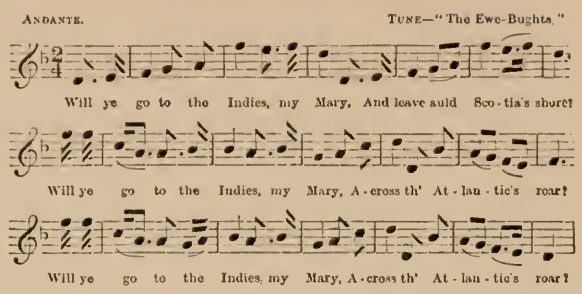
As I find I have still an hour to spare this morning before my conveyance goes away, I will give you "Nannie O," at length. [See vol. i. p. 16.]

Your remarks on "Ewe-bughts, Marion," are just: still it has obtained a place among our more classical Scottish songs; and, what with many beauties in its composition, and more prejudices in its favour, you will not find it easy to supplant it.

In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl. It is quite trifling, and has nothing of the merits of "Ewe-bughts;" but it will fill up this page. You must know that all my earlier love-songs were the breathings of ardent passion, and though it might have been easy in after-times to have given them a polish, yet that polish to me, whose they were, and who perhaps alone cared for them, would have defaced the legend of my heart, which was so faithfully inscribed on them. Their uncouth simplicity was, as they say of wines, their race.

* Stinchar was the real name—see LIFE.

TO MARY CAMPBELL.†


ANDANTE.
TUNE—"The Ewe-Bughts."
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, And leave auld Sco-tia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, A-cross th' At-lan-tic's roar?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary, A-cross th' At-lan-tic's roar?

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I ha'e sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I ha'e sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me,
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary;
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We ha'e plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join:
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour and the moment o' time!

"Galla Water," and "Auld Rob Morris," I think, will most probably be the next subject of my musings. However, even on my verses, speak out your criticisms with equal frankness. My wish is, not to stand aloft, the uncomplying bigot of *opiniâtretê*, but cordially to join issue with you in the furtherance of the work.

No. V.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

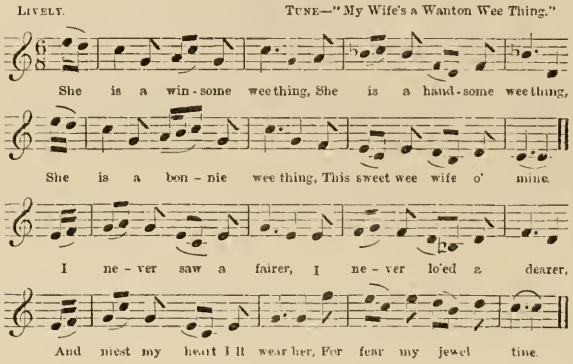
November 8, 1792.

IF you mean, my dear Sir, that all the songs in your collection shall be poetry of the first merit, I am afraid you will find more difficulty in the undertaking than you

† Thomson did not give the above a place in his collection.

are aware of. There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the feature-notes of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties. For instance, in the air, "My wife's a wanton wee thing," if a few lines smooth and pretty can be adapted to it, it is all you can expect. The following were made extempore to it; and though on further study I might give you something more profound, yet it might not suit the light-horse gallop of the air so well as this random clink.

THE WINSOME WEE THING.

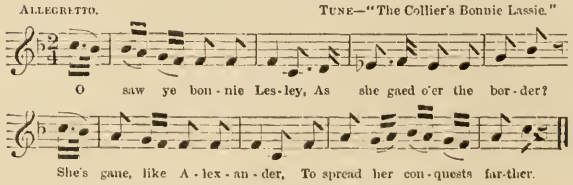

Lively.
Tune—"My Wife's a Wanton Wee Thing."
She is a win-some wee thing, She is a hand-some wee thing,
She is a bon-nie wee thing, This sweet wee wife o' mine.
I ne-ver saw a fairer, I ne-ver lo'ed a dearer,
And niest my heart I'll wear her, For fear my jewel tine.

She is a winsome wee thing.
She is a handsome wee thing,
She is a bonnie wee thing,
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

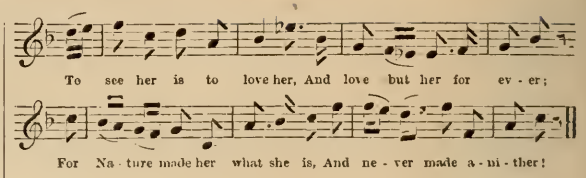
The warld's wrack we share o't,
The warstle and the care o't;
Wi' her I 'll blythely bear it,
And think my lot divine.

I have just been looking over the "Collier's bonny Dochter;" and if the following rhapsody, which I composed the other day on a charming Ayrshire girl, Miss Lesley Baillie, as she passed through this place to England, will suit your taste better than the "Collier Lassie," fall on and welcome :—

BONNIE LESLEY.*


Allegretto.
Tune—"The Collier's Bonnie Lassie."
O saw ye bon-nie Les-ley, As she gaed o'er the bor-der?
She's gane, like A-lex-an-der, To spread her con-quests far-ther.

* See General Correspondence.



Thou art a queen, fair Lesley,
Thy subjects we, before thee:
Thou art divine, fair Lesley,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The Deil he could na scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee;
He 'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

The powers aboon will tent thee,
Misfortune sha'na steer thee;
Thou 'rt like themselves sae lovely,
That ill they 'll ne'er let near thee.

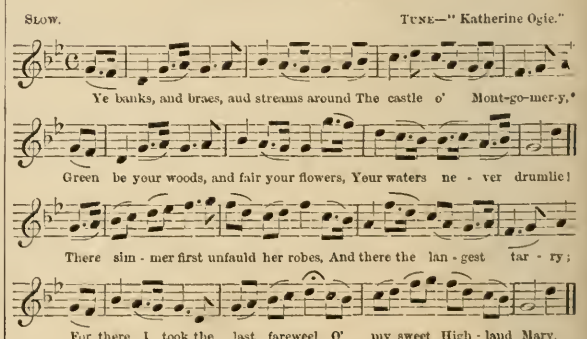
Return again, fair Lesley,
Return to Caledonie!
That we may brag, we hae a lass
There's nane again sae bonnie.

I have hitherto deferred the sublimer, more pathetic airs, until more leisure, as they will take, and deserve, a greater effort. However, they are all put into your hands, as clay into the hands of the potter, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour. Farewell, &c.

No. VI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

HIGHLAND MARY.


Slow.
Tune—"Katherine Ogie."
Ye banks, and braes, and streams around The castle o' Mont-go-mer-y,*
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers, Your waters ne-ver drumlie!
There sim-mer first unfauld her robes, And there the lan-gest tar-ry;
For there I took the last fareweel O' my sweet High-land Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk,
  How rich the hawthorn's blossom!
As underneath their fragrant shade,
  I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
  Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life,
  Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
  Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
  We tore oursels asunder;
But oh! fell death's untimely frost,
  That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green 's the sod, and cauld 's the clay,
  That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now those rosy lips,
  I aft ha'e kiss'd sae fondly!
And clos'd for aye the sparkling glance
  That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust,
  That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core,
  Shall live my Highland Mary.

14th Nov., 1792.

My Dear Sir,

I agree with you that the song, "Katherine Ogie," is very poor stuff, and unworthy, altogether unworthy, of so beautiful an air. I tried to mend it, but the awkward sound Ogie occurring so often in the rhyme, spoils every attempt at introducing sentiment into the

piece. The foregoing song pleases myself; I think it is in my happiest manner; you will see at first glance that it suits the air. The subject of the song is one of the most interesting passages of my youthful days; and I own that I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air which would insure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition.

I have partly taken your idea of "Auld Rob Morris." I have adopted the two first verses, and am going on with the song on a new plan, which promises pretty well. I take up one or another, just as the bee of the moment buzzes in my bonnet-lug; and do you, *sans ceremonie*, make what use you choose of the productions. Adieu, &c.

No. VII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *Nov.*, 1792.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS just going to write to you, that on meeting with your Nannie I had fallen violently in love with her. I thank you, therefore, for sending the charming rustic to me, in the dress you wish her to appear before the public. She does you great credit, and will soon be admitted into the best company.

I regret that your song for the "Lea-rig" is so short. The air is easy, soon sung, and very pleasing; so that, if the singer stops at the end of two stanzas, it is a pleasure lost ere it is well possessed.

Although a dash of our native tongue and manners is doubtless peculiarly congenial and appropriate to our melodies, yet I shall be able to present a considerable number of the very flowers of English song, well adapted to those melodies, which, in England at least, will be the means of recommending them to still greater attention than they have procured there. But you will observe, my plan is that every air shall, in the first place, have verses wholly by Scottish poets; and that those of English writers shall follow as additional songs, for the choice of the singer.

What you say of the "Ewe-bughts" is just; I admire it, and never meant to supplant it. All I requested was, that you would try your hand on some of the inferior stanzas, which are apparently no part of the original song: but this I do not urge, because the song is of sufficient length though those inferior stanzas be omitted, as they will be by the singer of taste. You must not think I expect all the songs to be of superlative merit; that were an unreasonable expectation. I am sensible that no poet can sit down doggedly to pen verses, and succeed well at all times.

I am highly pleased with your humorous and amorous rhapsody on "Bonnie Lesley;" it is a thousand times better than the "Collier's Lassie!" "The Deil he couldna scaith thee," &c., is an eccentric and happy thought. Do you not think, however, that the names of such old heroes as Alexander sound rather queer, unless in pompous or mere burlesque verse? Instead of the line, "And never made anither," I would humbly suggest, "And ne'er made sic anither;" and I would fain have you substitute some other line for "Return to Caledonie," in the last verse, because I think this alteration of the orthography and of the sound of Caledonia disfigures the word, and renders it Hudibrastic.

Of the other song, "My wife 's a winsome wee thing," I think the first eight lines very good, but I do not admire the other eight, because four of them are a bare repetition of the first verse. I have been trying to spin a stanza, but could make nothing better than the following: do you mend it, or as Yorick did with the love-letter, whip it up in your own way.

O leeze me on my wee thing,
My bonnie blythsome wee thing;
Sae lang's I ha'e my wee thing,
I 'll think my lot divine.

Tho' warld's care we share o't,
And may see meikle mair o't:
Wi' her I 'll blythely bear it,
And ne'er a word repine.

You perceive, my dear Sir, I avail myself of the liberty which you condescend to allow me, by speaking freely what I think. Be assured it is not my disposition to pick out the faults of any poem or picture I see; my first and chief object is to discover and be delighted with the beauties of the piece. If I sit down to examine critically, and at leisure, what perhaps you have written in haste, I may happen to observe careless lines, the re-perusal of which might lead you to improve them. The wren will often see what has been overlooked by the eagle.

I remain yours faithfully, &c.

P.S.—Your verses upon Highland Mary are just come to hand; they breathe the genuine spirit of poetry, and, like the music, will last for ever. Such verses united to such an air, with the delicate harmony of Pleyel superadded, might form a treat worthy of being presented to Apollo himself. I have heard the sad story of your Mary; you always seem inspired when you write of her.

No. VIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

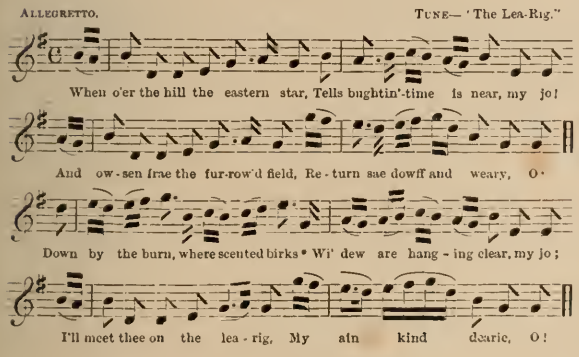
DUMFRIES, 1*st Dec.*, 1792.

YOUR alterations of my "Nannie O" are perfectly right. So are those of "My wife's a wanton wee thing." Your alteration of the second stanza is a positive improvement. Now, my dear Sir, with the freedom which characterizes our correspondence, I must not, cannot alter "Bonnie Lesley." You are right, the word "Alexander" makes the line a little uncouth, but I think the thought is pretty. Of Alexander, beyond all other heroes, it may be said in the sublime language of scripture, that "he went forth conquering and to conquer."

> "For Nature made her what she is,
> And never made anither" (such a person as she is).

This is, in my opinion, more poetical than "Ne'er made sic anither." However, it is immaterial; make it either way. "Caledonie," I agree with you, is not so good a word as could be wished, though it is sanctioned in three or four instances by Allan Ramsay; but I cannot help it. In short, that species of stanza is the most difficult that I have ever tried.

The "Lea-rig" is as follows :—

MY AIN KIND DEARIE, O.

ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE— 'The Lea-Rig."
When o'er the hill the eastern star, Tells bughtin'-time is near, my jo!
And ow-sen frae the fur-row'd field, Re-turn sae dowff and weary, O·
Down by the burn, where scented birks* Wi' dew are hang-ing clear, my jo;
I'll meet thee on the lea-rig, My ain kind dearie, O!

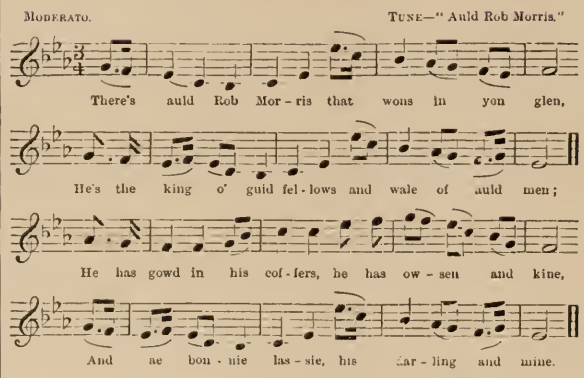
In mirkest glen, at midnight hour.
I 'd rove and ne'er be eerie, O,
If through that glen I gaed to thee,
My ain kind dearie, O!
Although the night were ne'er sae wild.
And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I 'd meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O!

The hunter lo'es the morning sun,
To rouse the mountain deer, my jo;
At noon the fisher seeks the glen,
Along the burn to steer, my jo;
Gi'e me the hour of gloaming grey,
It maks my heart sae cheery, O,
To meet thee on the lea-rig,
My ain kind dearie, O!

I am interrupted. Yours, &c.

IX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

AULD ROB MORRIS.*

MODERATO.
TUNE—"Auld Rob Morris."
There's auld Rob Mor-ris that wons in yon glen,
He's the king o' guid fel-lows and wale of auld men;
He has gowd in his cof-fers, he has ow-sen and kine,
And ae bon-nie las-sie, his dar-ling and mine.

She 's fresh as the morning, the fairest in May:
She 's sweet as the ev'ning amang the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as the lambs on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my e'e.

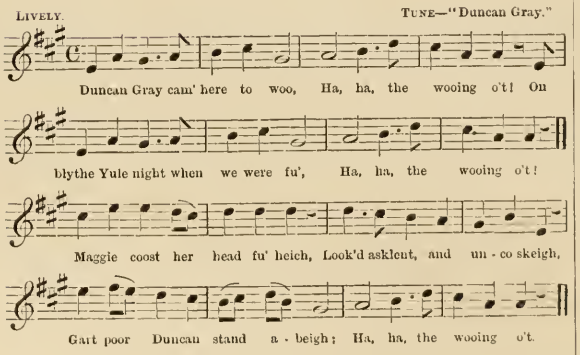
But O! she 's an heiress, auld Robin 's a laird,
And my daddie has nought but a cot-house and yard;
A wooer like me maunna hope to come speed,
The wounds I must hide that will soon be my dead.

The day comes to me, but delight brings me nane;
The night comes to me, but my rest it is gane;
I wander my lane like a night-troubled ghaist,
And I sigh as my heart it wad burst in my breast.

O had she but been of a lower degree,
I then might ha'e hop'd she 'd ha'e smil'd upon me!
O, how past describing had then been my bliss,
As now my distraction no words can express!

* "The first two lines are from an old ballad—the rest is wholly original."—CURRIE.

DUNCAN GRAY.*


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Duncan Gray."
Duncan Gray cam' here to woo, Ha, ha, the wooing o't! On
blythe Yule night when we were fu', Ha, ha, the wooing o't!
Maggie coost her head fu' heich, Look'd asklent, and un - co skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand a - beigh; Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;

Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig, †
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Duncan sigh'd baith out and in,
Grat his een baith bleert and blin',
Spak' o' lowpin' o'er a linn;
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Time and chance are but a tide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't;
Slighted love is sair to bide,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,
For a haughty hizzie die?
She may gae to—France for me!
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

How it comes let doctors tell,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
Meg grew sick—as he grew hale,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

* "This has nothing in common with the old licentious ballad of Duncan Gray but the first line, and part of the third. The rest is wholly original."—CURRIE.

† A well-known rock in the Firth of Clyde.

Something in her bosom wrings,
For relief a sigh she brings;
And O, her een, they spak' sic things!
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't,
Maggie's was a piteous case,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.
Duncan couldna be her death,
Swelling pity smoor'd his wrath;
Now they're crouse and canty baith,
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

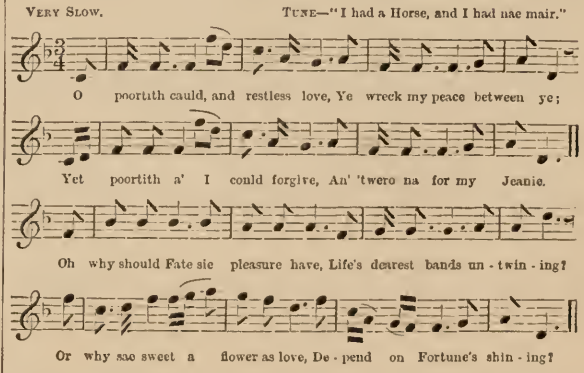
4th December, 1792.

The foregoing I submit, my dear Sir, to your judgment. Acquit them or condemn them, as seemeth good in your sight. Duncan Gray is that kind of light-horse gallop of an air which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature.

* Jean Lorimer, of Kemmis-hall in Kirkmahoe, is said to have been the subject of these verses. "I have been informed," says Chambers, "that Burns wrote this song in consequence of hearing a gentleman (now a respectable citizen of Edinburgh) sing the old homely ditty, which gives name to the tune, with an effect which made him regret that such pathetic music should be united to such unsentimental poetry. The meeting, I have been further informed, where this circumstance took place, was held in the Poet's favourite tavern, *Johnnie Dowie's*, in the Lawnmarket, Edinburgh; and there, at a subsequent meeting, the new song was also sung for the first time, by the same individual."

No. X.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

O POORTITH CAULD AND RESTLESS LOVE.*

VERY SLOW.
TUNE—"I had a Horse, and I had nae mair."
O poortith cauld, and restless love, Ye wreck my peace between ye;
Yet poortith a' I could forgive, An' 'twere na for my Jeanie.
Oh why should Fate sic pleasure have, Life's dearest bands un - twin - ing?
Or why sae sweet a flower as love, De - pend on Fortune's shin - ing?

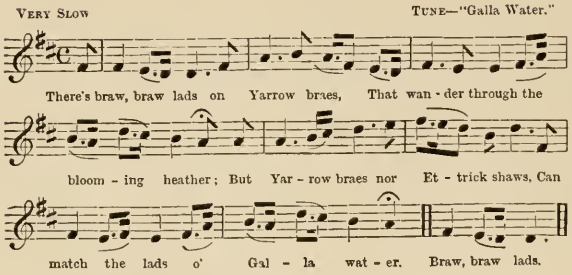
This warld's wealth when I think on,
Its pride and a' the lave o't;
Fie, fie on silly coward man,
That he should be the slave o't!
Or why should fate, &c.

Her een sae bonnie blue betray
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword aye,
She talks of rank and fashion.
O why should fate, &c

O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?
O why should fate, &c.

How blest the humble cotter's fate! *
He woos his simple dearie;
The sillie bogles, wealth and state,
Can never make them eerie.
O why should fate, &c.

GALLA WATER.


VERY SLOW
TUNE—"Galla Water."
There's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes, That wan - der through the
bloom - ing heather; But Yar - row braes nor Et - trick shaws, Can
match the lads o' Gal - la wat - er. Braw, braw lads.

But there is ane, a secret ane,
Aboon them a' I lo'e him better;
And I 'll be his, and he 'll be mine,
The bonnie lad o' Galla Water.

Although his daddie was nae laird,
And though I ha'e na meikle tocher;
Yet, rich in kindest, truest love,
We 'll tent our flocks by Galla Water.

It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace, or pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
O that 's the chiefest warld's treasure!

January, 1793.

Many returns of the season to you, my dear Sir. How comes on your publication? Will these two foregoing be of any service to you? I should like to know what songs you print to each tune, besides the verses to which it is set. In short, I would wish to give you my opinion on all the poetry you publish. You know it is my trade, and a man in the way of his trade may suggest useful hints, that escape men of much superior parts and endowments in other things.

If you meet with my dear and much-valued Cunningham, greet him in my name with the compliments of the season.

Yours, &c.

* "The wild-wood Indian's fate" in the original MS.

No. XI.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 20*th January*, 1793.

YOU make me happy, my dear Sir, and thousands will be happy to see the charming songs you have sent me. Many merry returns of the season to you, and may you long continue, among the sons and daughters of Caledonia, to delight them and to honour yourself.

The four last songs with which you favoured me, viz., "Auld Rob Morris," "Duncan Gray," "Galla Water," and "Cauld Kail," are admirable. Duncan is indeed a lad of grace, and his humour will endear him to every body.

The distracted lover in "Auld Rob," and the happy shepherdess in "Galla Water," exhibit an excellent contrast: they speak from genuine feeling, and powerfully touch the heart.

The number of songs which I had originally in view was limited; but I now resolve to include every Scotch air and song worth singing, leaving none behind but mere gleanings, to which the publishers of *omnegatherum* are welcome. I would rather be the editor of a collection from which nothing could be taken away, than of one to which nothing could be added. We intend presenting the subscribers with two beautiful stroke engravings—the one characteristic of the plaintive, and the other of the lively songs; and I have Dr. Beattie's promise of an essay upon the subject of our national music, if his health will permit him to write it. As a number of our songs have doubtless been called forth by particular events, or by the charms of peerless damsels, there must be many curious anecdotes relating to them.

The late Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, I believe, knew more of this than any body, for he joined to the pursuits of an antiquary a taste for poetry, besides being a man of the world, and possessing an enthusiasm for music beyond

† Tytler, well known as a defender of Mary Queen of Scots.

most of his contemporaries. He was quite pleased with this plan of mine, for I may say it has been solely managed by me, and we had several long conversations about it when it was in embryo. If I could simply mention the name of the heroine of each song, and the incident which occasioned the verses, it would be gratifying. Pray, will you send me any information of this sort, as well with regard to your own songs, as the old ones?

To all the favourite songs of the plaintive or pastoral kind will be joined the delicate accompaniments, &c., of Pleyel. To those of the comic and humorous class, I think accompaniments scarcely necessary; they are chiefly fitted for the conviviality of the festive board, and a tuneful voice, with a proper delivery of the words, renders them perfect. Nevertheless, to these I propose adding bass accompaniments, because then they are fitted either for singing or for instrumental performance, when there happens to be no singer. I mean to employ our right trusty friend, Mr. Clarke, to set the bass to these, which he assures me he will do *con amore*, and with much greater attention than he ever bestowed on any thing of the kind. But for this last class of airs I will not attempt to find more than one set of verses.

That eccentric bard, Peter Pindar, has started I know not how many difficulties about writing for the airs I sent to him, because of the peculiarity of their measure, and the trammels they impose on his flying Pegasus. I subjoin for your perusal the only one I have yet got from him, being for the fine air "Lord Gregory." The Scots verses printed with that air are taken from the middle of an old ballad, called "The Lass of Lochryan," which I do not admire. I have set down the air, therefore, as a creditor of yours. Many of the Jacobite songs are replete with wit and humour; might not the best of these be included in our volume of comic songs?

Postscript, from the Hon. A. Erskine.* — Mr. Thomson has been so obliging as to give me a perusal of your songs. "Highland Mary" is most enchantingly pathetic, and "Duncan Gray" possesses native genuine humour: "Spak o' lowpin' o'er a linn," is a line of itself that should make you immortal. I sometimes hear of you from our mutual friend Cunningham, who is a most excellent fellow, and possesses, above all men I know, the charm of a most obliging disposition. You kindly promised me, about a year ago, a collection of your unpublished productions, religious and amorous. I know from experience how irksome it is to copy. If you will get any trusty person in Dumfries to write them over fair, I will give Peter Hill whatever money he asks for his trouble, and I certainly shall not betray your confidence. I am, your hearty admirer,

Andrew Erskine.

* The Hon. Andrew Erskine was a younger brother of "the musical Earl of Kellie. He was originally in the army, but his tastes and habits were of a literary character. He was one of the contributors to 'Donaldson's Collection of Original Poems by Scottish Gentlemen,' and the author in part of a curious and rare volume, entitled 'Letters between the Hon. Andrew Erskine and James Boswell, Esq.' Edinburgh, 1763. These letters are partly in prose, and partly in verse."

No. XII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

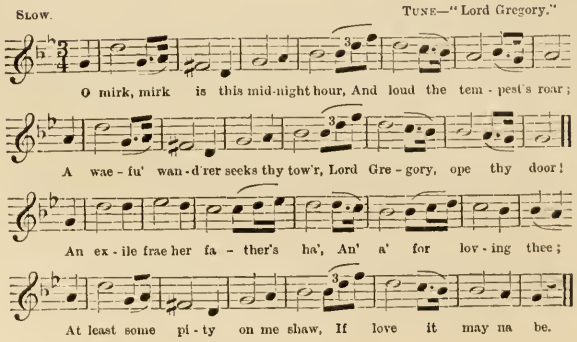
26th Jan., 1793.

I approve greatly, my dear Sir, of your plans. Dr. Beattie's essay will of itself be a treasure. On my part, I mean to draw up an appendix to the Doctor's essay, containing my stock of anecdotes, &c., of our Scots songs. All the late Mr. Tytler's anecdotes I have by me, taken down in the course of my acquaintance with him from his own mouth. I am such an enthusiast that, in the course of my several peregrinations through Scotland, I made a pilgrimage to the individual spot from which every song took its rise; "Lochaber" and the "Braes of Ballenden" excepted. So far as the locality, either from the title of the air or the tenor of the song, could be ascertained, I have paid my devotions at the particular shrine of every Scots muse.

I do not doubt but you might make a very valuable collection of Jacobite songs; but would it give no offence? In the meantime, do not you think that some of them, particularly "The Sow's Tail to Geordie," as an air, with other words, might be well worth a place in your collection of lively songs?

If it were possible to procure songs of merit, it would be proper to have one set of Scots words to every air, and that the set of words to which the notes ought to be set. There is a *naïveté*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison (at least to my taste, and, I will add, to every genuine Caledonian taste) with the simple pathos or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever.

The very name of Peter Pindar is an acquisition to your work. His "Gregory" is beautiful. I have tried to give you a set of stanzas in Scots on the same subject, which are at your service. Not that I intend to enter the lists with Peter; that would be presumption indeed. My song, though much inferior in poetic merit, has, I think, more of the ballad simplicity in it.

LORD GREGORY.*

Slow.
Tune—"Lord Gregory."
O mirk, mirk is this mid-night hour, And loud the tem - pest's roar;
A wae - fu' wan - d'rer seeks thy tow'r, Lord Gre - gory, ope thy door!
An ex - ile frae her fa - ther's ha', An' a' for lov - ing thee;
At least some pi - ty on me shaw, If love it may na be.

* To enable the reader to compare the "Lord Gregory" of Burns with that of Peter Pindar, we subjoin Dr. Wolcott's stanzas:—

Ah ope, Lord Gregory, thy door!
A midnight wanderer sighs;
Lord Gregory, mind'st thou not the grove,
By bonnie Irwine side,
Where first I own'd that virgin-love
I lang, lang had denied?

Hard rush the rains, the tempests roar,
And lightnings cleave the skies.

Who comes with woe at this drear night—
A pilgrim of the gloom?
If she whose love did once delight,
My cot shall yield her room.

Alas! thou heard'st a pilgrim mourn,
That once was priz'd by thee:
Think of the ring by yonder burn
Thou gav'st to love and me.

But should'st thou not poor Marian know,
I'll turn my feet and part;
And think the storms that round me blow
Far kinder than thy heart.

How often didst thou pledge and vow
Thou wad for aye be mine;
And my fond heart, itsel' sae true,
It ne'er mistrusted thine.

Hard is thy heart, Lord Gregory,
And flinty is thy breast:
Thou dart of heav'n that flashest by,
O wilt thou give me rest!
Ye mustering thunders from above,
Your willing victim see!
But spare and pardon my false love,
His wrangs to heaven and me!

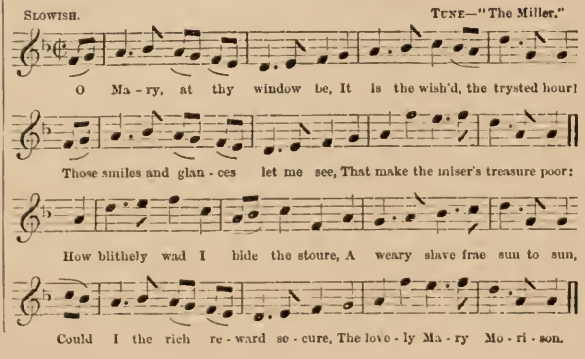
My most respectful compliments to the honourable gentleman who favoured me with a postscript in your last. He shall hear from me and receive his MSS. soon.

No. XIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

20th March, 1793.

MARY MORISON.


SLOWISH.
TUNE—"The Miller."
O Ma - ry, at thy window be, It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glan - ces let me see, That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blithely wad I bide the stoure, A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich re - ward se - cure, The love - ly Ma - ry Mo - ri - son.

Yestreen when, to the trembling string,
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw;
Though this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gi'e,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

My Dear Sir,

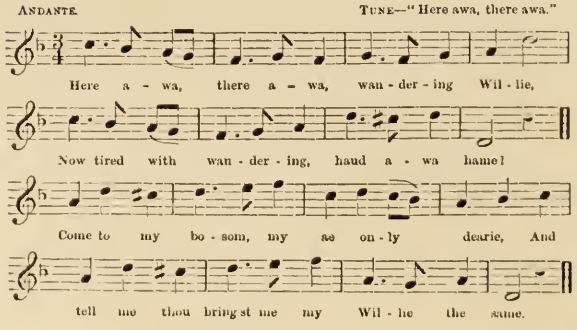
The song prefixed is one of my juvenile works. I leave it in your hands. I do not think it very remarkable, either for its merits or demerits. It is impossible (at least I feel it so in my stinted powers) to be always original, entertaining, and witty.

What is become of the list, &c., of your songs? I shall be out of all temper with you by-and-by. I have always looked upon myself as the prince of indolent correspondents, and valued myself accordingly; and I will not, cannot, bear rivalship from you nor any body else.

No. XIV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

March, 1793.

WANDERING WILLIE.

Andante.
Tune—"Here awa, there awa."
Here a - wa, there a - wa, wan - der - ing Wil - lie,
Now tired with wan - der - ing, haud a - wa hame!
Come to my bo - som, my a̤e on - ly dearie, And
tell me thou bring'st me my Wil - lie the same.

Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
It was na the blast brought the tear in my e'e;
Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me.

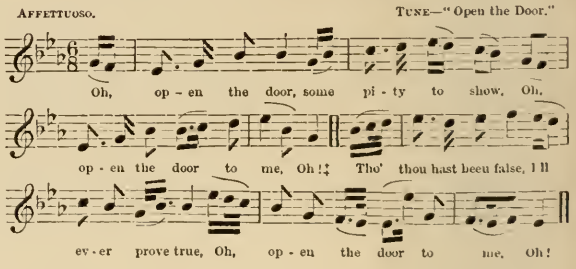
Ye hurricanes, rest in the cave o' your slumbers!
O how your wild horrors a lover alarms;
Awaken, ye breezes, row gently ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

But if he 's forgotten his faithfullest Nannie,
O still flow between us, thou wide roaring main;
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie 's my ain!

I leave it to you, my dear Sir, to determine whether the above, or the old, "Thro' the lang muir,"* be the best.

No. XV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

OPEN THE DOOR TO ME, OH.†

Affettuoso.
Tune—"Open the Door."
Oh, op - en the door, some pi - ty to show, Oh,
op - en the door to me, Oh!‡ Tho' thou hast been false, I'll
ev - er prove true, Oh, op - en the door to me, Oh!

* A song, preserved by Herd, seems to be referred to by Burns:—

Here awa, there awa, here awa, Willie,
Here awa, there awa, here awa hame;
Lang have I sought thee, dear have I bought thee,
Now I have gotten my Willie again.

Through the lang muir I have followed my Willie,
Through the lang muir I have followed him hame;
Whatever betide us, nought shall divide us,
Love now rewards all my sorrow and pain.

Here awa, there awa, here awa, Willie,
Here awa, there awa, here awa hame;
Come, love, believe me, nothing can grieve me,
Ilka thing pleases while Willie's at hame.

Burns afterwards altered the words of his own version, which will be found in a note to Letter No. XVII., together with the modern and popular melody of this beautiful song.

† With alterations.

‡ Original MS., "If love it may na be, Oh!"

Cauld is the blast upon my pale cheek,
But caulder thy love for me, Oh!
The frost that freezes the life at my heart,
Is nought to my pains frae thee, Oh!

The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,
And time is setting with me, Oh!
False friends, false love, farewell! for mair
I 'll ne'er trouble them, nor thee, Oh!

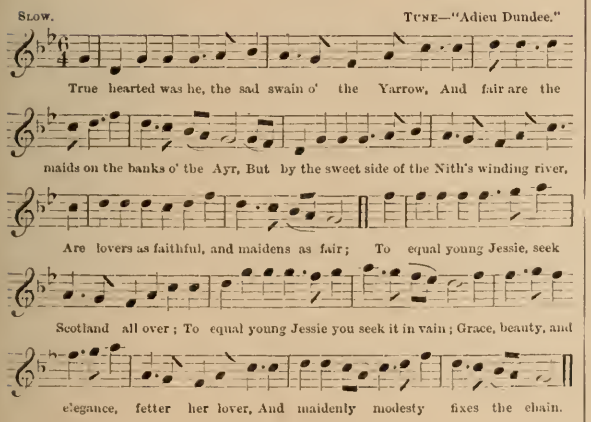
She has open'd the door, she has open'd it wide;
She sees his pale corse on the plain, Oh!
My true love! she cried, and sank down by his side,
Never to rise again, Oh!

I do not know whether this song be really mended.

No. XVI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

JESSIE.


Slow.
Tune—"Adieu Dundee."
True hearted was he, the sad swain o' the Yarrow, And fair are the
maids on the banks o' the Ayr, But by the sweet side of the Nith's winding river,
Are lovers as faithful, and maidens as fair; To equal young Jessie, seek
Scotland all over; To equal young Jessie you seek it in vain; Grace, beauty, and
elegance, fetter her lover, And maidenly modesty fixes the chain.

O, fresh is the rose in the gay, dewy morning,
And sweet is the lily at evening close;
But in the fair presence o' lovely young Jessie,
Unseen is the lily, unheeded the rose.
Love sits in her smile, a wizard ensnaring,
Enthron'd in her een he delivers his law:
And still to her charms she alone is a stranger!—
Her modest demeanour 's the jewel of a'.

No. XVII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, *2nd April*, 1793.

I will not recognize the title you give yourself, "the Prince of *indolent* correspondents;" but if the adjective were taken away, I think the title would then fit you exactly. It gives me pleasure to find you can furnish anecdotes with respect to most of the songs: these will be a literary curiosity.

I now send you my list of the songs, which I believe will be found nearly complete. I have put down the first lines of all the English songs which I propose giving in addition to the Scotch verses. If any others occur to you, better adapted to the character of the airs, pray mention them, when you favour me with your strictures upon everything else relating to the work.

Pleyel has lately sent me a number of the songs, with his symphonies and accompaniments added to them. I wish you were here, that I might serve up some of them to you with your own verses, by way of dessert after dinner. There is so much delightful fancy in the symphonies, and such a delicate simplicity in the accompaniments—they are, indeed, beyond all praise.

I am very much pleased with the several last productions of your muse: your "Lord Gregory," in my estimation, is more interesting than Peter's, beautiful as his is! Your "Here awa, Willie," must undergo some alterations to suit the air. Mr. Erskine and I have been conning it over; he will suggest what is necessary to make them a fit match.*

The gentleman I have mentioned, whose fine taste you are no stranger to, is so well-pleased both with the musical and poetical part of our work, that he has

* WANDERING WILLIE,

AS ALTERED BY MR. ERSKINE AND MR. THOMSON.

"Here awa', there awa', wandering Willie.
Here awa', there awa', haud awa' hame;
Come to my bosom, my ain only dearie.
Tell me thou bring'st me my Willie the same.

"Winter winds blew loud and cauld at our parting.
Fears for my Willie brought tears in my e'e,
Welcome now simmer, and welcome my Willie,
As simmer to nature, so Willie to me.

"Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave o' your slumbers.
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Blow soft, ye breezes! roll gently, ye billows!
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.

"But oh, if he 's faithless and minds na his Nannie.
Flow still between us, thou dark-heaving main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
While dying I think that my Willie's my ain."

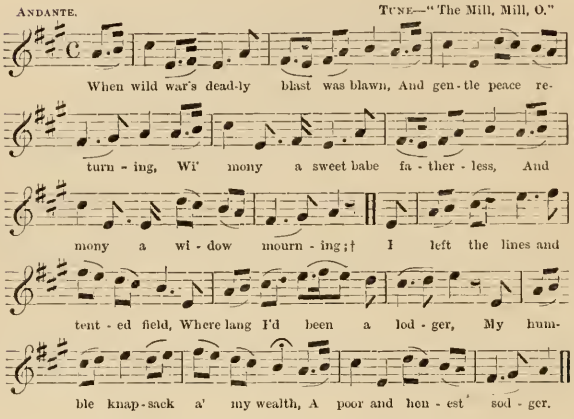
Our poet, with his usual judgment, adopted some of these alterations, and rejected others. The last edition is as follows:—

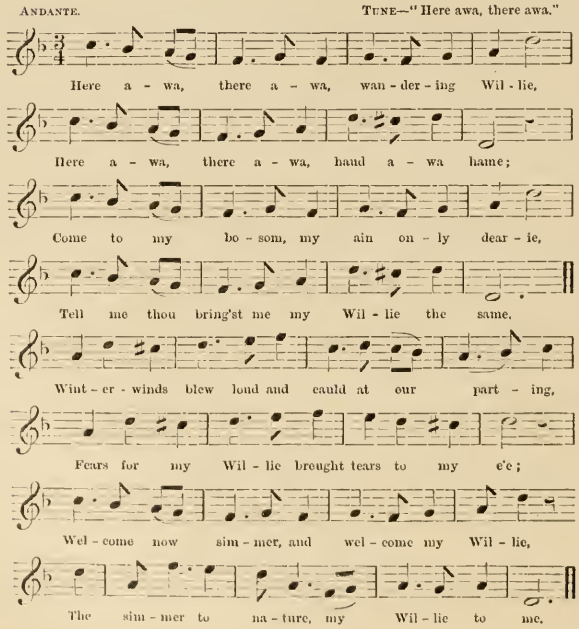
volunteered his assistance, and has already written four songs for it, which by his own desire I send for your perusal.

No. XVIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

THE POOR AND HONEST SODGER.*


ANDANTE.
TUNE—"The Mill, Mill, O."
When wild war's dead-ly blast was blawn, And gen-tle peace re-
turn - ing, Wi' mony a sweet babe fa - ther - less, And
mony a wi - dow mourn - ing;† I left the lines and
tent - ed field, Where lang I'd been a lod - ger, My hum-
ble knap-sack a' my wealth, A poor and hon - est sod - ger.

A leal, light heart was in my breast,
My hand unstain'd wi' plunder;

ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Here awa, there awa."
Here a - wa, there a - wa, wan - der - ing Wil - lie,
Here a - wa, there a - wa, haud a - wa hame;
Come to my bo - som, my ain on - ly dear - ie,
Tell me thou bring'st me my Wil - lie the same.
Wint - er - winds blew loud and cauld at our part - ing,
Fears for my Wil - lie brought tears to my e'e;
Wel - come now sim - mer, and wel - come my Wil - lie,
The sim - mer to na - ture, my Wil - lie to me.

And for fair Scotia, hame again,
I cheery on did wander.
I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
I thought upon my Nancy
I thought upon the witching smile
That caught my youthful fancy.

At length I reach'd the bonnie glen,
Where early life I sported;
I pass'd the mill, and trysting thorn,
Where Nancy aft I courted:
Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
Down by her mother's dwelling!
And turn'd me round to hide the flood
That in my een was swelling.

Wi' alter'd voice, quoth I, Sweet lass,
Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
O! happy, happy may he be,
That's dearest to thy bosom!
My purse is light, I 've far to gang,
And fain would be thy lodger;
I 've serv'd my king and country lang—
Take pity on a sodger.

"Rest, ye wild storms, in the cave of your slumbers,
How your dread howling a lover alarms!
Wauken, ye breezes, row gently, ye billows,
And waft my dear laddie ance mair to my arms.
"But oh, if he 's faithless, and minds na his Nannie,
Flow still between us, thou wide-roaring main!
May I never see it, may I never trow it,
But, dying, believe that my Willie's my ain."

"Several of the alterations seem to be of little importance in themselves, and were adopted, it may be presumed, for the sake of suiting the words better to the music. The Homeric epithet for the sea, *dark-hearing*, suggested by Mr. Erskine, is in itself more beautiful, as well perhaps as more sublime, than *wide-roaring*, which he has retained, but as it is only applicable to a placid state of the sea, or at most to the swell left on its surface after the storm is over, it gives a picture of that element not so well adapted to the ideas of eternal separation which the fair mourner is supposed to imprecate. From the original song of "Here awa', Willie," Burns has borrowed nothing but the second line and part of the first. The superior excellence of this beautiful poem will, it is hoped, justify the different editions of it which we have given."—CURRIE.

* "Burns, I have been informed," says a clergyman of Dumfriesshire, in a letter to Mr. George Thomson, "was one summer evening in an Inn at Brownhill, in Dumfriesshire, with a couple of friends, when a poor way-worn soldier passed the window; of a sudden it struck the Poet to call him in, and get the recital of his adventures. After hearing which, he all at once fell into one of those fits of abstraction not unusual to him. He was lifted to the region where he had his garland and his singing robes about him, and the result was this admirable song."

† Variation:—

"And eyes again with pleasure beam'd,
That had been blear'd with mourning."

The alteration is the work of Mr. Thomson; it cannot be commended. "I cannot," says Burns, "alter the disputed lines in 'The Mill, Mill, O:' what you think a defect, I esteem a positive beauty."

Sae wistfully she gaz'd on me,
And lovelier was than ever;
Quo' she, A sodger ance I lo'ed,
Forget him shall I never:
Our humble cot, and hamely fare,
Ye freely shall partake it,
That gallant badge—the dear cockade—
Ye're welcome for the sake o't.

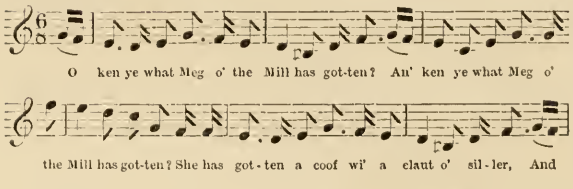
She gaz'd—she redden'd like a rose;
Syne pale like ony lily,
She sank within my arms, and cried,
Art thou my ain dear Willie?
By him that made yon sun and sky,
By whom true love 's regarded,
I am the man; and thus may still
True lovers be rewarded!

The wars are o'er, and I 'm come hame,
And find thee still true-hearted;
Though poor in gear, we're rich in love,
And mair, we' se ne'er be parted.
Quo' she, My grandsire left me gowd,
A mailen plenish'd fairly;
And come, my faithfu' sodger lad,
Thou 'rt welcome to it dearly!

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the sodger's prize,
The sodger's wealth is honour:
The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger;
Remember he 's his country's stay,
In day and hour of danger.

MEG O' THE MILL. *

A Little Lively. Tune—"Jackie Hume's Lament."


O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has got-ten? An' ken ye what Meg o'
the Mill has got-ten? She has got-ten a coof wi' a claut o' sil-ler, And
broken the heart o' the bar-ley Miller. The Miller was strappin', the Miller was
rud-dy; A heart like a lord and a hue like a la-dy; The laird was a
wid-die-fu', bleerit knurl; She's left the guid-fellow and ta'en the churl.

* The following is Burns' version of "Meg o' the Mill" supplied to Johnson's *Museum*:—

"O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten,
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?
A braw new naig wi' the tail o' a rottan,
And that's what Meg o' the Mill has gotten.

O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill loes dearly,
An' ken ye what Meg o' the Mill loes dearly?
A dram o' gude strunt in a morning early,
And that's what Meg o' the Mill loes dearly.

The Miller he hecht her a heart leal and loving;
The Laird did address her wi' matter mair moving,
A fine pacing-horse wi' a clear chained bridle,
A whip by her side, and a bonnie side-saddle.
O wae on the siller, it is sae prevailin';
And wae on the love that is fixed on a mailen!
A tocher's nae word in a true lover's parle,
But gi'e me my love, and a fig for the warl'!

No. XIX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

7th April, 1793.

THANK you, my dear Sir, for your packet. You cannot imagine how much this business of composing for your publication has added to my enjoyments. What with my early attachment to ballads, your book, &c., ballad-making is now as completely my hobby-horse as ever fortification was Uncle Toby's; so I'll e'en canter it away till I come to the limit of my race (God grant that I may take the right side of the winning-post!), and then cheerfully looking back on the honest folks with whom I have been happy, I shall say or sing, "Sae merry as we a' hae been!" and raising my last looks to the whole human race, the last words of the voice of "Coila" shall be, "Good night, and joy be wi' you a'!" So much for my last words; now for a few present remarks, as they have occurred at random on looking over your list.

The first lines of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and several other lines in it, are beautiful; but in my opinion—pardon me, revered shade of Ramsay!—the song is unworthy of the divine air. I shall try to make or mend. "For ever, fortune, wilt thou prove," is a charming song, but "Logan burn and Logan braes" are sweetly susceptible of rural imagery: I'll try that likewise, and if I succeed, the other song may class among the English ones. I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of "Logan Water" (for I know a good many different ones) which I think pretty:—

"Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes."

"My Patie is a lover gay," is unequal. "His mind is never muddy," is a muddy expression indeed.

"O ken ye how Meg o' the Mill was married,
An' ken ye how Meg o' the Mill was married?
The priest he was oxter'd, the clark he was carried.
And that 's how Meg o' the Mill was married.
O ken ye how Meg o' the Mill was bedded,
And ken ye how Meg o' the Mill was bedded?
The groom gat sae fu', he fell awald beside it,
And that's how Meg o' the Mill was bedded."

"Then I 'll resign and marry Pate,
And syne my cockernony."

This is surely far unworthy of Ramsay, or your book. My song, "Rigs of Barley," to the same tune does not altogether please me; but if I can mend it, and thrash a few loose sentiments out of it, I will submit it to your consideration. "The Lass o' Patie's Mill" is one of Ramsay's best songs; but there is one loose sentiment in it, which my much-valued friend Mr. Erskine will take into his critical consideration. In Sir J. Sinclair's statistical volumes are two claims, one, I think, from Aberdeenshire, and the other from Ayrshire, for the honour of this song. The following anecdote, which I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it of the late John, Earl of Loudon, I can, on such authorities, believe:—

Allan Ramsay was residing at Loudon Castle with the then earl, father to Earl John; and one forenoon riding, or walking out together, his Lordship and Allan passed a sweet romantic spot on Irvine Water, still called "Patie's Mill," where a bonnie lass was "tedding hay, bare-headed on the green." My Lord observed to Allan that it would be a fine theme for a song. Ramsay took the hint, and lingering behind, he composed the first sketch of it, which he produced at dinner.

"One day I heard Mary say" is a fine song; but for consistency's sake, alter the name "Adonis." Was there ever such banns published as a purpose of marriage between Adonis and Mary? I agree with you that my song, "There's nought but care on every hand," is much superior to "Poortith Cauld." The original song "The Mill, Mill, O," though excellent, is, on account of delicacy, inadmissible; still I like the title, and think a Scottish song would suit the notes best; and let your chosen song, which is very pretty, follow as an English set. "The banks of the Dee" is, you know, literally "Langolee" to slow time. The song is well enough, but has some false imagery in it: for instance,

"And sweetly the nightingale sung from the tree."

In the first place, the nightingale sings in a low bush, but never from a tree; and in the second place, there never was a nightingale seen, or heard, on the banks of the Dee, or any other river in Scotland. Exotic rural imagery is always comparatively flat. If I could hit on another stanza, equal to "The small birds rejoice," &c., I do myself honestly avow that I think it a superior song.* "John Anderson, my jo"—the song to this tune in Johnson's Museum is my composition, and I think it not my worst; if it suit you, take it and welcome. Your collection of

* "It will be found, in the course of this Correspondence, that the bard produced a second stanza of "The Chevalier's Lament" (to which he here alludes) worthy of the first."—CURRIE.

sentimental and pathetic songs is, in my opinion, very complete; but not so your comic ones. Where are "Tullochgorum," "Lumps o' puddin'," "Tibbie Fowler," and several others, which, in my humble judgment, are well worthy of preservation? There is also one sentimental song of mine in the Museum, which never was known out of the immediate neighbourhood, until I got it taken down from a country girl's singing. It is called "Craigieburn Wood," and in the opinion of Mr. Clarke is one of the sweetest Scottish songs. He is quite an enthusiast about it: and I would take his taste in Scottish music against the taste of most connoisseurs.

You are quite right in inserting the last five in your list, though they are certainly Irish. "Shepherds, I have lost my love!" is to me a heavenly air—what would you think of a set of Scottish verses to it? I have made one to it a good while ago, which I think . . . but in its original state is not quite a lady's song. I inclose an altered, not amended copy for you, if you choose to set the tune to it, and let the Irish verses follow.*

Mr. Erskine's songs are all pretty, but his "Lone Vale" is divine.

Yours, &c.

Let me know just how you like these random hints.

No. XX.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *April*, 1793.

I REJOICE to find, my dear Sir, that ballad-making continues to be your hobby-horse. Great pity 'twould be were it otherwise. I hope you will amble it away for many a year, and "witch the world with your horsemanship."

I know there are a good many lively songs of merit that I have not put down in the list sent you; but I have them all in my eye. "My Patie is a lover gay," though a little unequal, is a natural and very pleasing song, and I humbly think we ought not to displace or alter it, except the last stanza. . . .†

* "Mr. Thomson, it appears, did not approve of this song, even in its altered state. It does not appear in the Correspondence; but it is probably one to be found in his MSS. beginning—

"Yestreen I got a pint of wine,
A place where body saw na;
Yestreen lay on this breast of mine,
The gowden locks of Anna."

It is highly characteristic of our Bard but the train of sentiment does not correspond with the air to which he proposes it should be allied."—CURRIE.

† "The original letter from Mr. Thomson contains many observations on Scottish songs, and on the manner of adapting the words to the music, which, at his desire, are suppressed. The subsequent letter of Burns refers to several of these observations."—CURRIE.

No. XXI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

I HAVE yours, my dear Sir, this moment. I shall answer it and your former letter, in my desultory way of saying whatever comes uppermost.

The business of many of our tunes wanting, at the beginning, what fiddlers call the starting-note, is often a rub to us poor rhymers.

"There 's braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
That wander through the blooming heather,"

you may alter to

"Braw, braw lads on Yarrow braes,
Ye wander," &c.

My song, "Here awa', there awa'," as amended by Mr. Erskine, I entirely approve of, and return you.‡

Give me leave to criticise your taste in the only thing in which it is, in my opinion, reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade. Of pathos, sentiment, and point you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the very essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity: now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are a little apt to sacrifice to the foregoing.

Ramsay, as every other poet, has not been always equally happy in his pieces; still I cannot approve of taking such liberties with an author as Mr. W. proposes doing with "The last time I came o'er the moor." Let a poet, if he chooses, take up the idea of another, and work it into a piece of his own; but to mangle the works of the poor bard, whose tuneful tongue is now mute for ever in the dark and narrow house, by Heaven, 'twould be sacrilege! I grant that Mr. W.'s version is an improvement; but I know Mr. W. well and esteem him much; let him mend the song as the Highlander mended his gun: he gave it a new stock, a new lock, and a new barrel.

I do not, by this, object to leaving out improper stanzas, where that can be done without spoiling the whole. One stanza in "The Lass o' Patie's Mill" must be left out; the song will be nothing worse for it. I am not sure if we can take the same liberty with "Corn rigs are bonnie." Perhaps it might want the last stanza, and be the better for it. "Cauld kail in Aberdeen" you must leave with me yet a while. I have vowed to have a song to that air on the lady whom I attempted to celebrate in the verses, "Poortith cauld and restless love." At any rate, my other song, "Green grow the rashes," will never suit. That song is current in Scotland under the old title, and to the merry

‡ "The reader has already seen that Burns did not finally adopt all of Mr. Erskine's alterations."—CURRIE.

old tune of that name, which of course would mar the progress of your song to celebrity. Your book will be the standard of Scots songs for the future: let this idea ever keep your judgment on the alarm.

I send a song on a celebrated toast in this country, to suit "Bonnie Dundee." I send you also a ballad to the "Mill, Mill, O."*

"The last time I came o'er the moor," I would fain attempt to make a Scots song for, and let Ramsay's be the English set. You shall hear from me soon. When you go to London on this business, can you come by Dumfries? I have still several MS. Scots airs by me, which I have picked up mostly from the singing of country lasses. They please me vastly; but your learned lugs would perhaps be displeased with the very feature for which I like them. I call them simple; you would pronounce them silly. Do you know a fine air called "Jackie Hume's Lament?" I have a song of considerable merit to that air. I 'll inclose you both the song and tune, as I had them ready to send to Johnson's Museum.† I send you likewise, to me, a beautiful little air, which I had taken down from *viva voce*.‡ Adieu.

No. XXII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1793.

My Dear Sir,

I had scarcely put my last letter into the post-office when I took up the subject of "The last time I came o'er the moor," and ere I slept, drew the outlines of the foregoing.§ How far I have succeeded, I leave on this, as on every other occasion, to you to decide. I own my vanity is flattered, when you give my songs a place in your elegant and superb work; but to be of service to the work is my first wish. As I have often told you, I do not in a single instance wish you, out of compliment to me, to insert any thing of mine. One hint let me give you—whatever Mr. Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scottish airs; I mean in the song department; but let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently irreducible to the more modern rules; but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect.

* "The song to the tune of "Bonnie Dundee" is that in No. XVI. The ballad to the "Mill, Mill, O" is that beginning—

"When wild war's deadly blast was blawn."—Currie.

† The song alluded to is that given in No. XVIII. "O ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?"

‡ The air here mentioned is that for which he wrote the ballad of "Bonnie Jean." See No. XXVII.

§ This song will be found in a subsequent part.

No. XXIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, *26th April*, 1793.

I heartily thank you, my dear Sir, for your last two letters, and the songs which accompanied them. I am always both instructed and entertained by your observations; and the frankness with which you speak out your mind is to me highly agreeable. It is very possible I may not have the true idea of simplicity in composition. I confess there are several songs, of Allan Ramsay's for example, that I think silly enough, which another person, more conversant than I have been with country people, would perhaps call simple and natural. But the lowest scenes of simple nature will not please generally, if copied precisely as they are. The poet, like the painter, must select what will form an agreeable as well as a natural picture. On this subject it were easy to enlarge; but, at present, suffice it to say that I consider simplicity, rightly understood, as a most essential quality in composition, and the ground-work of beauty in all the arts. I will gladly appropriate your most interesting new ballad, "When wild war's deadly blast," &c., to the "Mill, Mill, O," as well as the two other songs to their respective airs; but the third and fourth lines of the first verse must undergo some little alteration in order to suit the music. Pleyel does not alter a single note of the songs. That would be absurd indeed! With the airs which he introduces into the sonatas I allow him to take such liberties as he pleases; but that has nothing to do with the songs. . . .

P.S.—I wish you would do as you proposed with your "Rigs o' Barley." If the loose sentiments are thrashed out of it, I will find an air for it; but as to this there is no hurry.

No. XXIV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

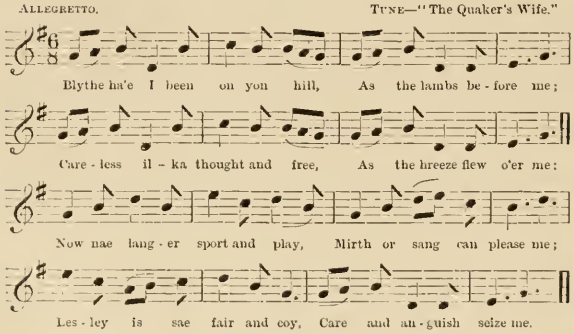
June, 1793.

When I tell you, my dear Sir, that a friend of mine, in whom I am much interested, has fallen a sacrifice to these

accursed times, you will easily allow that it might unhinge me for doing any good among ballads. My own loss, as to pecuniary matters, is trifling; but the total ruin of a much-loved friend is a loss indeed. Pardon my seeming inattention to your last commands.

I cannot alter the disputed lines in the "Mill, Mill, O."* What you think a defect, I esteem as a positive beauty: so you see how doctors differ. I shall now, with as much alacrity as I can muster, go on with your commands.

You know Frazer, the hautboy-player in Edinburgh—he is here, instructing a band of music for a fencible corps quartered in this county. Among many of his airs that please me, there is one well known, as a reel, by the name of "The Quaker's Wife;" and which I remember a grand-aunt of mine used to sing, by the name of "Liggeram Cosh, my bonnie wee lass." Mr. Frazer plays it slow, and with an expression that quite charms me. I became such an enthusiast about it that I made a song for it, which I here subjoin, and inclose Frazer's set of the tune. If they hit your fancy, they are at your service; if not, return me the tune, and I will put it in Johnson's Museum. I think the song is not in my worst manner.

BLYTHE HA'E I BEEN.†

ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"The Quaker's Wife."
Blythe ha'e I been on yon hill, As the lambs be - fore me;
Care - less il - ka thought and free, As the breeze flew o'er me:
Now nae lang - er sport and play, Mirth or sang can please me;
Les - ley is sae fair and coy, Care and an - guish seize me.

Heavy, heavy is the task,
Hopeless love declaring:
Trembling, I dow nought but glow'r,
Sighing, dumb, despairing!

* "The lines were the third and fourth—

"Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning."

"As our poet had maintained a long silence, and the first number of Mr. Thomson's Musical Work was in the press, this gentleman ventured, by Mr. Erskine's advice, to substitute for them in that publication—

"And eyes again with pleasure beam'd
That had been bleared with mourning."

Though better suited to the music, these lines are inferior to the original. This is the only alteration adopted by Mr. Thomson, which Burns did not approve, or at least assent to."—CURRIE.

† Miss Lesley Baillie is the subject of this song.

If she winna ease the thraws
In my bosom swelling;
Underneath the grass-green sod,
Soon maun be my dwelling.

I should wish to hear how this pleases you.

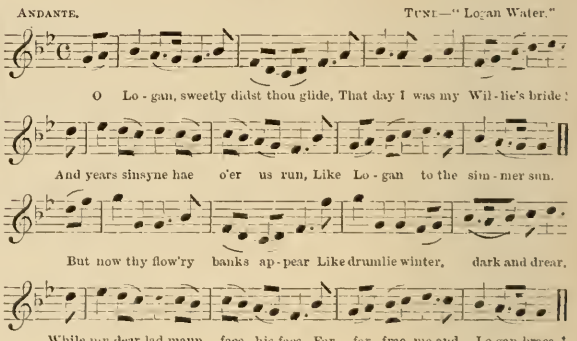
No. XXV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

25th June, 1793.

HAVE you ever, my dear Sir, felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of those mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate provinces, and lay nations waste, out of the wantonness of ambition, or often from still more ignoble passions? In a mood of this kind to-day, I recollected the air of "Logan Water;" and it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some public destroyer; and overwhelmed with private distress, the consequence of a country's ruin. If I have done any thing at all like justice to my feelings, the following song, composed in three-quarters of an hour's meditation in my elbow chair, ought to have some merit:—

LOGAN BRAES.


ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Logan Water."
O Lo - gan, sweetly didst thou glide, That day I was my Wil - lie's bride:
And years sinsyne hae o'er us run, Like Lo - gan to the sim - mer sun.
But now thy flow'ry banks ap - pear Like drumlie winter, dark and drear,
While my dear lad maun face his foes. Far, far frae me and Lo-gan braes!

‡ Stenhouse says, "About the year 1783 a new song, to the tune of 'Logan Water,' written by Mr. John Mayne, a native of Glasgow, became very popular in the south-west of Scotland. It was published along with the old air, not long thereafter, by the music-sellers, and soon became a favourite at Vauxhall and other parts of the kingdom. It was afterwards printed in the *Star* Newspaper of London, signed with the initial letter of the author's surname, on 23rd May, 1789, as follows:—

'By Logan's streams that rin sae deep
Fu' aft wi' glee I've herded sheep;
Herded sheep or gather'd slaes,
Wi' my dear lad on Logan braes:

Again the merry month o' May
Has made our hills and valleys gay;
The birds rejoice in leafy bowers,
The bees hum round the breathing flowers:
Blithe morning lifts his rosy eye,
And evening's tears are tears of joy:
My soul, delightless, a' surveys,
While Willie 's far frae Logan braes.

Within yon milk-white hawthorn bush,
Amang her nestlings sits the thrush;
Her faithfu' mate will share her toil,
Or wi' his song her cares beguile:
But I, wi' my sweet nurslings here,
Nae mate to help, nae mate to cheer,
Pass widow'd nights, and joyless days,
While Willie 's far frae Logan braes.

O wae upon you, men o' state,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!
How can your flinty hearts enjoy
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?*
But soon may peace bring happy days,
And Willie hame to Logan braes!

Do you know the following beautiful little fragment in Witherspoon's collection of Scots song?

O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle wa':

But, wae's my heart! thae days are gane,
And fu' o' grief I herd my lane;
While my dear lad maun face his faes
Far, far frae me and Logan braes!

'Nae mair at Logan kirk will he,
Atween the preachings meet wi' me,
Meet wi' me, or, when it's mirk,
Convoy me hame frae Logan kirk.
I weel may sing—thae days are gane!
Frae kirk and fair I come alane,
While my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes!'

"Burns imagined that this delightful composition of Mr. Mayne was of considerable antiquity. In a letter to a correspondent, dated 7th April, 1793, he says, 'I remember the two last lines of a verse in some of the old songs of Logan Water, which I think pretty.'

'Now my dear lad maun face his faes,
Far, far frae me and Logan braes.'

"These two lines Burns has incorporated into his elegant stanzas to the same tune, composed in one of his pensive moods."

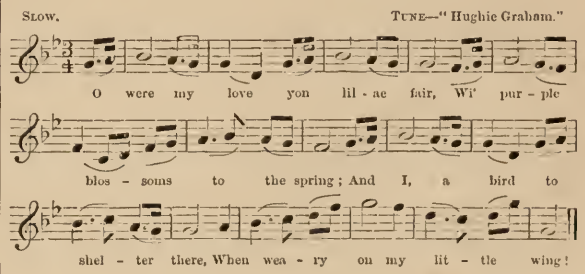
* Original MS.

"Ye mind na, 'mid your cruel joys,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cries."

And I mysel' a drap o' dew,
Into her bonnie breast to fa'!

O, there beyond expression blest,
I 'd feast on beauty a' the night;
Seal'd on her silk-saft faulds to rest,
Till fley'd awa by Phœbus' light.

This thought is inexpressibly beautiful; and quite, so far as I know, original. It is too short for a song, else I would forswear you altogether unless you gave it a place. I have often tried to eke a stanza to it, but in vain. After balancing myself for a musing five minutes, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, I produced the following.

The verses are far inferior to the foregoing, I frankly confess; but if worthy of insertion at all, they might be first in place: as every poet, who knows any thing of his trade, will husband his best thoughts for a concluding stroke.

Slow.
Tune—"Hughie Graham."
O were my love yon lil - ac fair, Wi' pur - ple
blos - soms to the spring; And I, a bird to
shel - ter there, When wea - ry on my lit - tle wing!

How I wad mourn, when it was torn
By autumn wild and winter rude!
But I wad sing on wanton wing,
When youthfu' May its bloom renew'd †

No. XXVI.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Monday, 1*st July*, 1793.

I am extremely sorry, my good Sir, that any thing should happen to unhinge you. The times are terribly out of tune; and when harmony will be restored, Heaven knows.

The first book of songs, just published, will be despatched to you along with this. Let me be favoured with your opinion of it frankly and freely.

† The fragment which Burns has here eked out will be found in Herd's collection.

I shall certainly give a place to the song you have written for the "Quaker's Wife;" it is quite enchanting. Pray will you return the list of songs, with such airs added to it as you think ought to be included. The business now rests entirely on myself, the gentlemen who originally agreed to join the speculation having requested to be off. No matter, a loser I cannot be. The superior excellence of the work will create a general demand for it as soon as it is properly known. And were the sale even slower than it promises to be, I should be somewhat compensated for my labour, by the pleasure I shall receive from the music. I cannot express how much I am obliged to you for the exquisite new songs you are sending me; but thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done: as I will be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to inclose a small mark of my gratitude,* and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not return it, for, by Heaven, if you do, our correspondence is at an end: and though this would be no loss to you, it would mar the publication, which under your auspices cannot fail to be respectable and interesting. . . .

Wednesday Morning.

I THANK you for your delicate additional verses to the old fragment, and for your excellent song to "Logan Water;" Thomson's truly elegant one will follow for the English singer. Your apostrophe to statesmen is admirable; but I am not sure if it is quite suitable to the supposed gentle character of the fair mourner who speaks it.

No. XXVII.

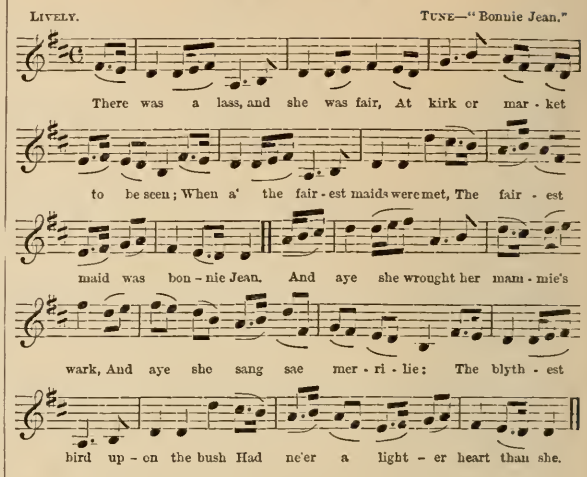
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

2nd July, 1793.

My Dear Sir,

I HAVE just finished the following ballad, and as I do think it in my best style, I send it you. Mr. Clarke, who wrote down the air from Mrs. Burns' wood-note wild, is very fond of it, and has given it a celebrity by teaching it to some young ladies of the first fashion here. If you do not like the air enough to give it a place in your collection, please return it. The song you may keep, as I remember it.

* A five pound bank note.

BONNIE JEAN.†

Lively.
Tune—"Bonnie Jean."
There was a lass, and she was fair, At kirk or mar - ket
to be seen; When a' the fair - est maids were met, The fair - est
maid was bon - nie Jean. And aye she wrought her mam - mie's
wark, And aye she sang sae mer - ri - lie: The blyth - est
bird up - on the bush Had ne'er a light - er heart than she.

But hawks will rob the tender joys
That bless the little lintwhite's nest;
And frost will blight the fairest flowers,
And love will break the soundest rest.
Young Robie was the brawest lad,
The flower and pride of a' the glen;
And he had owsen, sheep, and kye,
And wanton naigies nine or ten.

He gaed wi' Jeanie to the tryste,
He danc'd wi' Jeanie on the down;
And lang ere witless Jeanie wist,
Her heart was tint, her peace was stown.
As in the bosom o' the stream,
The moon-beam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling, pure, was tender love
Within the breast o' bonnie Jean.‡

And now she works her mammie's wark,
And aye she sighs wi' care and pain;
Yet wist na what her ail might be,
Or what wad mak' her weel again.
But did na Jeanie's heart loup light,
And did na joy blink in her e'e,
As Robie tauld a tale o' love
Ae e'enin' on the lily lea?

The sun was sinking in the west,
The birds sang sweet in ilka grove;
His cheek to hers he fondly prest,
And whisper'd thus his tale o' love:

† Miss Jean M'Murdo, daughter of John M'Murdo, Esq., of Drumlanrig, is said to have been the heroine of this ballad-song

‡ "In the original MS. the poet asks Mr. Thomson if this stanza is not original?"—Currie.

BONNIE JEAN.

O Jeanie fair, I lo'e thee dear;
O canst thou think to fancy me?
Or wilt thou leave thy mammie's cot,
And learn to tent the farms wi' me?

At barn or byre thou shalt na drudge,
Or naething else to trouble thee;*
But stray amang the heather-bells,
And tent the waving corn wi' me.
Now what could artless Jeanie do?
She had nae will to say him na:
At length she blush'd a sweet consent,
And love was aye between them twa.

I have some thoughts of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones, the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full; but dashes or asterisks, so as ingenuity may find them out.

The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M., daughter to Mr. M. of D., one of your subscribers. I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager.

No. XXVIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

July, 1793.

I ASSURE you, my dear Sir, that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. It degrades me in my own eyes. However, to return it would savour of affectation; but as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS' INTEGRITY—on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the by-past transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you! BURNS' character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants which the cold unfeeling ore can supply; at least, I will take care that such a character he shall deserve.

Thank you for my copy of your publication. Never did my eyes behold, in any musical work, such elegance and correctness. Your preface, too, is admirably written; only your partiality to me has made you say too much: however, it will bind me down to double every effort in the future progress of the work. The following are a few remarks on the songs in the list you sent me. I never copy what I write to you, so I may be often tautological, or perhaps contradictory.

"The Flowers of the Forest" is charming as a poem, and should be, and must be, set to the notes; but, though out of your rule, the three stanzas, beginning,

"I ha'e seen the smiling o' fortune beguiling,"

are worthy of a place, were it but to immortalize the author of them, who is an old lady of my acquaintance, and at this moment living in Edinburgh. She is a Mrs. Cockburn; I forget of what place; but from Roxburghshire.† What a charming apostrophe is

"O fickle fortune, why this cruel sporting,
Why, why torment us—poor sons of a day!"

The old ballad, "I wish I were where Helen lies," is silly to contemptibility.‡ My alteration of it in Johnson's

* Original MS.

"Thy handsome foot thou shalt na set
In barn or byre to trouble thee."

† A well-known Edinburgh beauty and poet, of Fairnalee in Roxburghshire.

‡ "There is a copy of this ballad given in the account of the Parish of Kirkpatrick Fleeming (which contains the tomb of fair Helen Irvine), in the Statistics of Sir John Sinclair, vol. xiii. p. 275, to which this character is certainly not applicable."—CURRIE.

Stenhouse says, "Helen Irvine, a celebrated beauty of the sixteenth century, and daughter of the then Laird of Kirkconnel, in the county of Dumfries, was beloved by two gentlemen at the same time, who both resided in that neighbourhood. The name of the favourite suitor was Adam Fleming, that of the unsuccessful lover Bell of Blacket-house. The addresses of the latter, though seconded by the friends of the lady, being inflexibly rejected, he vowed to sacrifice Fleming to his resentment. Bent on this horrid design, he watched every opportunity of carrying it into execution; and one evening, while the happy pair were sitting on a romantic spot washed by the river Kirtle, the desperate lover suddenly appeared on the opposite bank with a loaded musket, which he levelled at the breast of his rival. Helen, aware of his atrocious aim, instantly threw herself before the body of her lover, and receiving the mortal wound which was intended for him, fell back and died in his arms. The murderer fled beyond seas, but was closely pursued from place to place by Fleming, who at length overtook him in the vicinity of Madrid. A furious combat ensued, which terminated in the death of the fugitive assassin. Fleming, on his return, went to visit the grave of his beloved Helen in the church-yard of Kirkconnel, and stretching himself upon it, he expired, breathing her name with his last sigh. His remains were interred by her side. The grave of the lovers is still pointed out, and on the tombstone the inscription *Hic jacet Adamus Fleming* is yet legible. A sword and a cross are sculptured on the stone, which the peasantry tell you represents the gun that shot Helen, and the sword that killed her murderer. A heap of stones is raised on the spot where the murder was committed, as a lasting monument of the abhorrence which fair Helen's contemporaries felt for the bloody deed.

There are various editions of this ballad in Pinkerton's Scottish Poems, Sir Walter Scott's Border Minstrelsy, Ritson's Scottish Songs, and other collections, but they all differ more or less from one another, and the several airs to which the words have been adapted are also dissimilar. All of them are evidently modern, and totally different from that to which the editor has always heard the ballad sung in the south of Scotland.

FAIR HELEN OF KIRKCONNEL.

'I wish I were where Helen lies,
For night and day on me she cries;
O that I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirkconnel lee!

is not much better. Mr. Pinkerton, in his, what he calls, ancient ballads (many of them notorious, though beautiful enough, forgeries), has the best set. It is full of his own interpolations; but no matter.

In my next I will suggest to your consideration a few songs which may have escaped your hurried notice. In the mean time, allow me to congratulate you now, as a brother of the quill. You have *committed* your character and fame; which will now be tried, for ages to come, by the illustrious jury of the Sons and Daughters of Taste—all whom poesy can please, or music charm.

Being a bard of nature, I have some pretensions to second sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm, that your great-grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride, "This so much admired selection was the work of my ancestor."

'O Helen! lovely, chaste, and fair,
A ringlet o' thy gowden hair
In my fond bosom I will wear,
Until the day I die.

'I curst the heart that form'd the thought,
I curst the hand that fir'd the shot,
When in these arms my Helen dropt,
And died to shelter me.

'Ye weel may think my heart was sair,
When down she sank and spak nae mair,
And I beheld my lovely fair
Stretch'd on Kirkconnel lee.

'To foreign climes the traitor fled,
But quickly after him I sped;
Ere lang beneath my glaive he bled,
For her that died for me.

'I wish my grave were growing green,
Where Kirtle rows sae smooth and sheen
And close by Helen's might be seen
On fair Kirkconnel lee.

'O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
Were I wi' thee I wad be blest,
For thou liest lowly and at rest
On fair Kirkconnel lee.

'Where Helen lies! Where Helen lies!
For night and day on me she cries!
I wish I were where Helen lies,
Who died for love of me.

Some of the peasantry allege that Helen was killed by an arrow in place of a bullet. In the following passage from a poem, written by Thomas Poyton, a pauper, after he had read Drummond of Hawthornden's History of Scotland, printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July, 1783, this branch of the traditional story is evidently alluded to.

'T'other day as she work'd at her wheel,
She sang of fair Eleanor's fate,
Who fell by stern jealousy's steel,
As on Kirtle's smooth margin she sate.

'Her lover to shield from the dart,
Most eagerly she interpos'd;
The arrow transpierc'd her fond heart,
The fair in his arms her eyes clos'd.

'O Fleming, how wretched thy doom,
Thy love to see wounded to death;
No wonder that, stretch'd on her tomb,
In grief thou surrender'st thy breath.

'Yet one consolation was thine,
To soften fate's rigid decree,
Thy mistress her life did resign,
A martyr to love and to thee.'"

No. XXIX.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 1*st August*, 1793.

Dear Sir,

I had the pleasure of receiving your last two letters, and am happy to find you are quite pleased with the appearance of the first book. When you come to hear the songs sung and accompanied, you will be charmed with them.

"The bonnie brucket Lassie" certainly deserves better verses, and I hope you will match her. "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," "Let me in this ae night," and several of the livelier airs, wait the muse's leisure. These are peculiarly worthy of her choice gifts: besides, you 'll notice, that in airs of this sort the singer can always do greater justice to the poet, than in the slower airs of "The bush aboon Traquair," "Lord Gregory," and the like; for in the manner the latter were frequently sung, you must be contented with the sound, without the sense. Indeed both the airs and words are disguised by the very slow, languid, psalm-singing style in which they are too often performed: they lose animation and expression altogether, and instead of speaking to the mind, or touching the heart, they cloy upon the ear, and set us a yawning!

Your ballad, "There was a lass and she was fair," is simple and beautiful, and shall undoubtedly grace my collection.

No. XXX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

My dear Thomson,

I hold the pen for your friend Clarke,* who at present is studying the music of the spheres at my elbow.

* Stephen Clarke, teacher and composer of music. He superintended the musical department of Johnson's *Museum*.

The Georgium Sidus he thinks is rather out of tune; so until he rectify that matter, he cannot stoop to terrestrial affairs.

He sends you six of the Rondeau subjects, and if more are wanted, he says you shall have them. . . .

Confound your long stairs!

S. CLARKE.

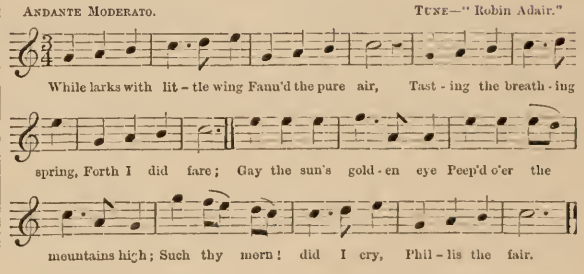
No. XXXI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Your objection, my dear Sir, to the passages in my song of "Logan Water," is right in one instance; but it is difficult to mend it: if I can I will. The other passage you object to does not appear in the same light to me.

I have tried my hand on "Robin Adair," and you will probably think, with little success; but it is such a cursed, cramp, out-of-the-way measure, that I despair of doing any thing better to it.

PHILLIS THE FAIR.*

Andante Moderato.
Tune—"Robin Adair."
While larks with lit - tle wing Fann'd the pure air, Tast - ing the breath - ing
spring, Forth I did fare; Gay the sun's gold - en eye Peep'd o'er the
mountains high; Such thy morn! did I cry, Phil - lis the fair.

In each bird's careless song
Glad did I share,
While yon wild flowers among;
Chance led me there:
Sweet to the opening day,
Rosebuds bent the dewy spray;
Such thy bloom! did I say,
Phillis the fair.

* A tribute to Miss Phillis M'Murdo, written at the request of Mr Stephen Clarke. She was a pupil of his, and he had a passion for her. She afterwards became Mrs. Lockhart of Carnwath, and died September 5, 1825.

Down in a shady walk,
  Doves cooing were:
I marked the cruel hawk
  Caught in a snare;
So kind may fortune be,
Such make his destiny!
He who would injure thee,
  Phillis the fair.

So much for namby-pamby. I may, after all, try my hand on it in Scots verse. There I always find myself most at home.

I have just put the last hand to the song I meant for "Cauld kail in Aberdeen." If it suits you to insert it, I shall be pleased, as the heroine is a favourite of mine. If not, I shall also be pleased; because I wish, and will be glad, to see you act decidedly on the business. 'Tis a tribute as a man of taste, and as an editor, which you owe yourself.

No. XXXII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

August, 1792.

My Good Sir,

I consider it one of the most agreeable circumstances attending this publication of mine, that it has procured me so many of your much-valued epistles. Pray make my acknowledgments to St. Stephen for the tunes; tell him I admit the justness of his complaint on my stair-case, conveyed in his laconic postscript to your *jeu d'esprit*, which I perused more than once, without discovering exactly whether your discussion was music, astronomy, or politics; though a sagacious friend, acquainted with the convivial habits of the poet and the musician, offered me a bet of two to one, you were just drowning care together; that an empty bowl was the only thing that would deeply affect you, and the only matter you could then study how to remedy!

I shall be glad to see you give "Robin Adair" a Scottish dress. Peter is furnishing him with an English suit for a change, and you are well matched together. Robin's air is excellent, though he certainly has an out-of-the-way measure as ever poor Parnassian wight was plagued with. I wish you would invoke the muse for a single elegant stanza to be substituted for the concluding objectionable verses of "Down the burn, Davie," so that this most exquisite song may no longer be excluded from good company.

Mr. Allan has made an inimitable drawing from your "John Anderson, my Jo," which I am to have engraved as a frontispiece to the humorous class of songs; you will be quite charmed with it, I promise you. The old couple are seated by the fireside. Mrs. Anderson in great good humour is clapping John's shoulders, while he smiles and looks at her with such glee, as to show that he fully recollects the pleasant days and nights when they were "first acquent." The drawing would do honour to the pencil of Teniers.*

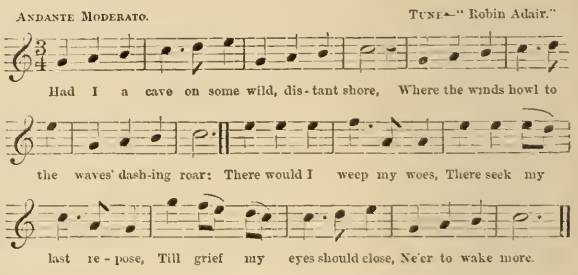
No. XXXIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

That crinkum-crankum tune, "Robin Adair," has run so in my head, and I succeeded so ill in my last attempt, that I have ventured in this morning's walk one essay more. You, my dear Sir, will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which happened about three years ago. That struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows:—

HAD I A CAVE.


Andante Moderato.
Tune—"Robin Adair."
Had I a cave on some wild, dis-tant shore, Where the winds howl to
the waves' dash-ing roar: There would I weep my woes, There seek my
last re-pose, Till grief my eyes should close, Ne'er to wake more.

Falsest of womankind,
  Canst thou declare
All thy fond-plighted vows
  Fleeting as air?
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury,
Then in thy bosom try
  What peace is there!

By the way, I have met with a musical Highlander in Breadalbane's Fencibles, which are quartered here, who

* Allan was born in 1744 in Alloa, and was for many years master and director of the academy established by the Board of Trustees at Edinburgh for manufactures and improvements. He illustrated "The Gentle Shepherd," and left a series of sketches designed for the poems of Burns. He died on the 6th August, 1796, just a fortnight after the poet.

assures me that he well remembers his mother singing Gaelic songs to both "Robin Adair" and "Gramachree." They certainly have more of the Scotch than Irish taste in them.

This man comes from the vicinity of Inverness: so it could not be any intercourse with Ireland that could bring them; except, what I shrewdly suspect to be the case, the wandering minstrels, harpers, and pipers used to go frequently errant through the wilds both of Scotland and Ireland, and so some favourite airs might be common to both. A case in point—they have lately in Ireland published an Irish air, as they say, called "Caun du delish." The fact is, in a publication of Corri's a great while ago you will find the same air, called a Highland one, with a Gaelic song set to it. Its name there, I think, is "Oran Gaoil," and a fine air it is. Do ask honest Allan, or the Rev. Gaelic parson,* about these matters.

No. XXXIV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

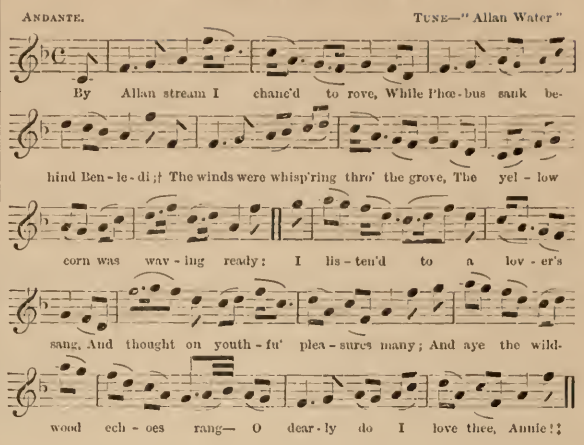
August, 1793.

My Dear Sir,

"Let me in this ae night" I will reconsider. I am glad that you are pleased with my song, "Had I a cave," &c., as I liked it myself.

I walked out yesterday evening with a volume of the Museum in my hand, when, turning up "Allan Water," 'What numbers shall the muse repeat," &c., as the words appeared to me rather unworthy of so fine an air, and recollecting that it is on your list, I sat and raved under the shade of an old thorn, till I wrote one to suit the measure. I may be wrong; but I think it not in my worst style. You must know that in Ramsay's Teatable, where the modern song first appeared, the ancient name of the tune, Allan says, is "Allan Water," or "My love Annie 's very bonnie." This last has certainly been a line of the original song: so I took up the idea, and, as you will see, have introduced the line in its place, which I presume it formerly occupied: though I likewise give you a choosing line, if it should not hit the cut of your fancy:—

* The Rev. Joseph Robertson Macgregor, the first minister of the first Gaelic chapel in Edinburgh, which was erected on the Castle-hill 1769. He died in 1801.

BY ALLAN STREAM.

Andante.
Tune—"Allan Water"
By Allan stream I chanc'd to rove, While Phœbus sank be-
hind Ben-le-di;† The winds were whisp'ring thro' the grove, The yel-low
corn was wav-ing ready: I lis-ten'd to a lov-er's
sang, And thought on youth-fu' plea-sures many; And aye the wild-
wood ech-oes rang— O dear-ly do I love thee, Annie!‡

O happy be the woodbine bower,
Nae nightly bogle make it eerie;
Nor ever sorrow stain the hour,
The place, and time I met my dearie!
Her head upon my throbbing breast,
She, sinking, said, "I 'm thine for ever!"
While mony a kiss the seal imprest,
The sacred vow we ne'er should sever.

The haunt o' spring 's the primrose brae,
The simmer joys the flocks to follow:
How cheery thro' her shortening day
Is autumn in her weeds o' yellow!
But can they melt the glowing heart,
Or chain the soul in speechless pleasure,
Or through each nerve the rapture dart,
Like meeting her, our bosom's treasure?

Bravo! say I; it is a good song. Should you think so too, not else, you can set the music to it, and let the other follow as English verses.

Autumn is my propitious season. I make more verses in it than all the year else.

God bless you!

No. XXXV.

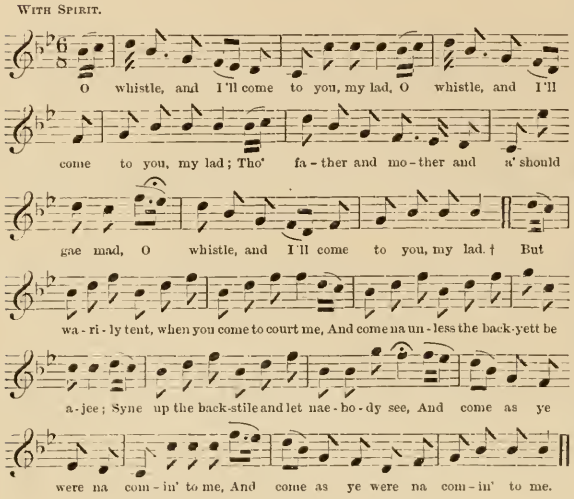
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

Is "Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad," one of your airs? I admire it much; and yesterday I set the follow-

† A mountain west of Strath-Allan, 3009 feet high.—R. B.
‡ Or, "O my love Annie's very bonnie."—R. B.

ing verses to it. Urbani, whom I have met with here, begged them of me, as he admires the air much; but as I understand that he looks with rather an evil eye on your work, I did not choose to comply. However, if the song does not suit your taste, I may possibly send it him. The set of the air which I had in my eye is in Johnson's Museum.

O WHISTLE AND I'LL COME TO YOU.*

With Spirit.
O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad, O whistle, and I'll
come to you, my lad; Tho' fa-ther and mo-ther and a' should
gae mad, O whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad.† But
wa-ri-ly tent, when you come to court me, And come na un-less the back-yett be
a-jee; Syne up the back-stile and let nae-bo-dy see, And come as ye
were na com-in' to me, And come as ye were na com-in' to me.

O whistle, and I 'll come to you, my lad,
O whistle, and I 'll come to you, my lad;
Tho' father and mither, and a' should gae mad,
O whistle, and I 'll come to you, my lad.
At kirk, or at market, whene'er ye meet me,
Gang by me as though that ye car'd na a flie;
But steal me a blink o' your bonnie black e'e,
Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me,
Yet look as ye were na lookin' at me.

O whistle, and I 'll come to you, my lad,
O whistle, and I 'll come to you, my lad;
Tho' father and mither, and a' should gae mad,
O whistle, and I 'll come to you, my lad.
Aye vow and protest that ye care na for me,
And whyles ye may lightly my beauty a wee;
But court na anither, though jokin' ye be,
For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me,
For fear that she wyle your fancy frae me.

* This air was a great favourite of Burns'. In 1787 he forwarded the two following stanzas to Johnson's Museum:—

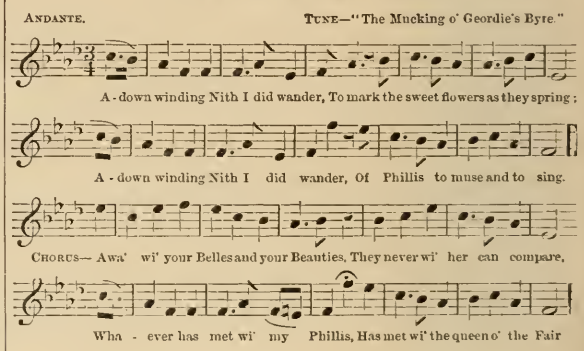
"O whistle, an' I 'll come to you, my lad,
O whistle, an' I 'll come to you, my lad;
Though father and mither should baith gae mad,
O whistle, an' I 'll come to you, my lad.
Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me;
Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me;
Come down the back stairs, and let nacbody see;
And come as ye were na' coming to me,
And come as ye were na' coming to me."

† MS. Variation:—

O whistle, and I 'll come to thee, my jo,
O whistle, and I 'll come to thee, my jo;
Tho' father and mother and a' should say no,
O whistle, and I 'll come to thee, my jo.

Another favourite air of mine is, "The muckin' o' Geordie's byre." When sung slow with expression, I have wished that it had had better poetry: that, I have endeavoured to supply as follows:—

ADOWN WINDING NITH.


Andante. Tune—"The Mucking o' Geordie's Byre."
A-down winding Nith I did wander, To mark the sweet flowers as they spring;
A-down winding Nith I did wander, Of Phillis to muse and to sing.
Chorus— Awa' wi' your Belles and your Beauties, They never wi' her can compare,
Wha-ever has met wi' my Phillis, Has met wi' the queen o' the Fair

The daisy amus'd my fond fancy,
So artless, so simple, so wild;
Thou emblem, said I, o' my Phillis!
For she is Simplicity's child.
Awa wi' your belles, &c.

The rose-bud 's the blush o' my charmer,
Her sweet balmy lip when 'tis prest:
How fair and how pure is the lily!
But fairer and purer her breast.
Awa wi' your Belles, &c.

Yon knot of gay flowers in the arbour,
They ne'er wi' my Phillis can vie;
Her breath is the breath o' the woodbine,
Its dew-drop o' diamond her eye.
Awa wi' your Belles, &c.

Her voice is the song of the morning,
That wakes thro' the green spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains,
On music, and pleasure, and love.
Awa wi' your Belles, &c.

But beauty how frail and how fleeting,
The bloom of a fine summer's day!
While worth in the mind o' my Phillis
Will flourish without a decay.
Awa wi' your Belles, &c.

Mr. Clarke begs you to give Miss Phillis a corner in your book, as she is a particular flame of his. She is a Miss P. M.* sister to "Bonnie Jean." They are both pupils of his. You shall hear from me, the very first grist I get from my rhyming-mill.

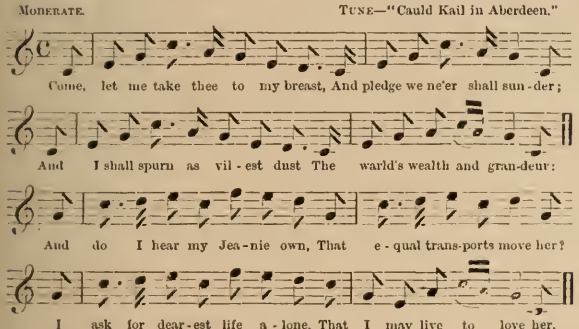
No. XXXVI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

THAT tune, "Cauld Kail," is such a favourite of yours, that I once more roved out yesterday for a gloamin'-shot at the muses;† when the muse that presides o'er the shores of Nith, or rather my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following. I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early, sweet, simple inspirer that was by my elbow, "smooth gliding without step," and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings, by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect that she has followed me hither, or at least makes me occasional visits; secondly, the last stanza of this song I send you is the very words that Coila taught me many years ago, and which I set to an old Scots reel in Johnson's Museum.

COME, LET ME TAKE THEE.


MODERATE.
TUNE—"Cauld Kail in Aberdeen."
Come, let me take thee to my breast, And pledge we ne'er shall sun-der;
And I shall spurn as vil-est dust The warld's wealth and gran-deur:
And do I hear my Jea-nie own, That e-qual trans-ports move her?
I ask for dear-est life a-lone, That I may live to love her.

* Phillis M'Murdo. See before. The original MS. contained the following additional stanza, which for some reason was deleted:—

"The primrose is o'er for the season,
But mark where the violet is blown;
How modest it peeps from the covert,
So Modesty sure is her own!"

† "'Gloamin'"—twilight, probably from glooming. A beautiful poetic word, which ought to be adopted in England. A gloamin'-shot, a twilight interview."—CURRIE.

Thus in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure;
I'll seek nae mair o' heaven to share,
Than sic a moment's pleasure:
And by thy een, sae bonnie blue,
I swear I 'm thine for ever!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never!

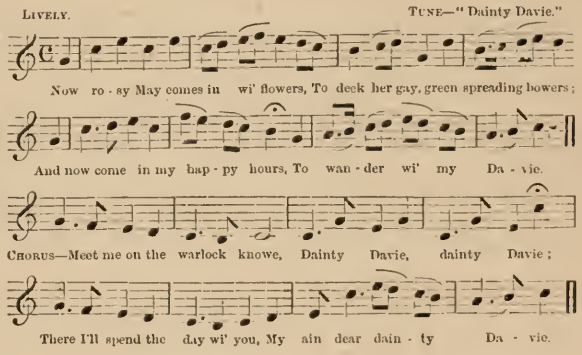
If you think the above will suit your idea of your favourite air, I shall be highly pleased. "The last time I came o'er the moor" I cannot meddle with, as to mending it; and the musical world have been so long accustomed to Ramsay's words, that a different song, though positively superior, would not be so well received. I am not fond of choruses to songs, so I have not made one for the foregoing.

No. XXXVII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

August, 1793.

DAINTY DAVIE.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Dainty Davie."
Now ro-sy May comes in wi' flowers, To deck her gay, green spreading bowers;
And now come in my hap-py hours, To wan-der wi' my Da-vie.
CHORUS—Meet me on the warlock knowe, Dainty Davie, dainty Davie;
There I'll spend the day wi' you, My ain dear dain-ty Da-vie.

The crystal waters round us fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round us blaw,
A wandering wi' my Davie
Meet me on the warlock knowe, &c.

When purple morning starts the hare,
To steal upon her early fare,
Then thro' the dews I will repair,
To meet my faithfu' Davie.
Meet me on the warlock knowe, &c.

When day, expiring in the west,
The curtain draws o' nature's rest,

I flee to his arms I lo'e best,
And that's my ain dear Davie.
Meet me on the warlock knowe, &c.

So much for Davie. The chorus, you know, is to the low part of the tune. See Clarke's set of it in the Museum.

N.B.—In the Museum they have drawled out the tune to twelve lines of poetry, which is d——d nonsense. Four lines of song, and four of chorus, is the way.

No. XXXVIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 1*st Sept.*, 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,

SINCE writing you last, I have received half a dozen songs, with which I am delighted beyond expression. The humour and fancy of "Whistle, and I'll come to you, my lad," will render it nearly as great a favourite as "Duncan Gray." "Come, let me take thee to my breast," "Adown winding Nith," and "By Allan stream," &c., are full of imagination and feeling, and sweetly suit the airs for which they are intended. "Had I a cave on some wild distant shore," is a striking and affecting composition. Our friend, to whose story it refers, read it with a swelling heart, I assure you. The union we are now forming, I think, can never be broken; these songs of yours will descend with the music to the latest posterity, and will be fondly cherished so long as genius, taste, and sensibility exist in our island.

While the muse seems so propitious, I think it right to inclose a list of all the favours I have to ask of her—no fewer than twenty and three! I have burdened the pleasant Peter with as many as it is probable he will attend to: most of the remaining airs would puzzle the English poet not a little; they are of that peculiar measure and rhythm, that they must be familiar to him who writes for them.

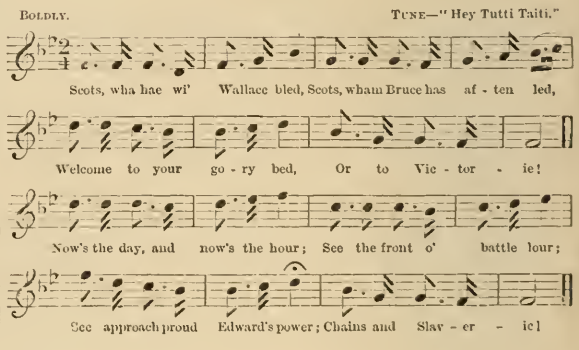
No. XXXIX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

YOU may readily trust, my dear Sir, that any exertion in my power is heartily at your service. But one thing I must hint to you; the very name of Peter Pindar is of great service to your publication; so get a verse from him now and then, though I have no objection, as well as I can, to bear the burden of the business.

You know that my pretensions to musical taste are merely a few of nature's instincts, untaught and untutored by art. For this reason, many musical compositions, particularly where much of the merit lies in counterpoint, however they may transport and ravish the ears of you connoisseurs, affect my simple lug no otherwise than merely as melodious din. On the other hand, by way of amends, I am delighted with many little melodies which the learned musician despises as silly and insipid. I do not know whether the old air, "Hey, tutti taitie," may rank among this number; but well I know that, with Frazer's hautboy, it has often filled my eyes with tears. There is a tradition, which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that it was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my yesternight's evening walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence,* which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant ROYAL SCOT's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning.

BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY AT BANNOCKBURN.

BOLDLY.
TUNE—"Hey Tutti Taiti."
Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled, Scots, wham Bruce has af - ten led,
Welcome to your go - ry bed, Or to Vic - tor - ie!
Now's the day, and now's the hour; See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's power; Chains and Slav - er - ie!

Wha will be a traitor-knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Let him on wi' me!

* See LIFE.

By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty 's in every blow!
Let us do, or die!

So may God ever defend the cause of truth and liberty, as he did that day! Amen.

P. S.—I showed the air to Urbani, who was highly pleased with it, and begged me to make soft verses for it; but I had no idea of giving myself any trouble on the subject, till the accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming mania. Clarke's set of the tune, with his bass, you will find in the Museum; though I am afraid that the air is not what will entitle it to a place in your elegant selection.

No. XL.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

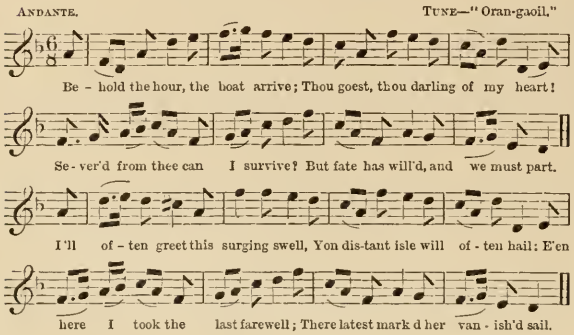
September, 1793.

I DARE say, my dear Sir, that you will begin to think my correspondence is persecution. No matter, I can't help it;

a ballad is my hobby-horse; which, though otherwise a simple sort of harmless idiotical beast enough, has yet this blessed headstrong property, that when once it has fairly made off with a hapless wight, it gets so enamoured with the tinkle-gingle, tinkle-gingle of its own bells, that it is sure to run poor pilgarlic, the bedlam-jockey, quite beyond any useful point or post in the common race of man.

The following song I have composed for "Oran-gaoil," the Highland air that, you tell me in your last, you have resolved to give a place to in your book. I have this moment finished the song, so you have it glowing from the mint. If it suit you, well!—if not, 'tis also well!

BEHOLD THE HOUR.*


ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Oran-gaoil."
Be - hold the hour, the boat arrive; Thou goest, thou darling of my heart!
Se - ver'd from thee can I survive? But fate has will'd, and we must part.
I'll of - ten greet this surging swell, Yon dis-tant isle will of - ten hail: E'en here I took the last farewell; There latest mark'd her van - ish'd sail.

Along the solitary shore,
While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,
Across the rolling, dashing roar,
I 'll westward turn my wistful eye:
Happy, thou Indian grove, I 'll say,
Where now my Nancy's path may be!
While thro' thy sweets she loves to stray,
O tell me, does she muse on me!

No. XLI.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, *5th September*, 1793.

I BELIEVE it is generally allowed that the greatest modesty is the sure attendant of the greatest merit. While you are sending me verses that even Shakspeare might be proud to own, you speak of them as if they were ordinary productions! Your heroic ode is to me the noblest composition of the kind in the Scottish language. I happened to dine yesterday with a party of your friends, to whom I read it. They were all charmed with it, entreated me to find out a suitable air for it, and reprobated the idea of giving it a tune so totally devoid of interest or grandeur as "Hey, tutti taitie." Assuredly your partiality for this tune must arise from the ideas associated in your mind by the tradition concerning it: for I never heard any person, and I have conversed again and again with the greatest enthusiasts for Scottish airs, I say, I never heard any one speak of it as worthy of notice.

I have been running over the whole hundred airs, of which I lately sent you the list; and I think "Lewie Gordon" is most happily adapted to your ode: at least with a very slight variation of the fourth line, which I shall presently submit to you. There is in "Lewie Gordon" more of the grand than the plaintive, particularly when it is sung with a degree of spirit, which your words would oblige the singer to give it. I would have no scruple about substituting your ode in the room of "Lewie Gordon," which has neither the interest, the grandeur, nor the poetry that characterize your verses. Now the variation I have to suggest upon the last line of each verse, the only line too short for the air, is as follows:—

Verse 1st, Or to *glorious* victorie.
" 2nd, *Chains*—chains and slaverie.
" 3rd, Let him, *let him* turn and flee.
" 4th, Let him *bravely* follow me.
" 5th, But *they shall*, they shall be free.
" 6th, Let us, *let us* do, or die.

If you connect each line with its own verse, I do not think you will find that either the sentiment or the expression loses any of its energy. The only line which I dislike in the whole of the song is "Welcome to your gory bed." Would not another word be preferable to "welcome?" In your next I will expect to be informed whether you agree to what I have proposed. The little alterations I submit with the greatest deference.

The beauty of the verses you have made for "Oran-gaoil" will insure celebrity to the air.

No. XLII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I HAVE received your list, my dear Sir, and here go my observations on it.†

* Clarinda is said to have been the inspirer of these verses. She was going to the West Indies.

† "Mr. Thomson's list of songs for his publication. In his remarks the bard proceeds in order, and goes through the whole; but on many of them he merely signifies his approbation. All his remarks of any importance are presented to the reader."—CURRIE.

"Down the burn, Davie." I have this moment tried an alteration, leaving out the last half of the third stanza, and the first half of the last stanza, thus:—

As down the burn they took their way,
And thro' the flowery dale;
His cheeks to hers he aft did lay,
And love was aye the tale.

With "Mary, when shall we return,
Sic pleasure to renew?"
Quoth Mary, "Love, I like the burn,
And aye shall follow you."*

"Thro' the wood, laddie"—I am decidedly of opinion that both in this and "There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," the second or high part of the tune being a repetition of the first part an octave higher, is only for instrumental music, and would be much better omitted in singing.

"Cowden-knowes." Remember in your index that the song in pure English to this tune, beginning,

"When summer comes, the swains on Tweed,"

is the production of Crawford. Robert was his Christian name.

"Laddie, lie near me," must lie by me for some time. I do not know the air; and until I am complete master of a tune, in my own singing (such as it is), I can never compose for it. My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison and harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom—humming every now and then the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fire-side of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on. Seriously, this, at home, is almost invariably my way.

What cursed egotism!

"Gil Morice" I am for leaving out. It is a plaguy length; the air itself is never sung; and its place can well be supplied by one or two songs for fine airs that are not in your list. For instance, "Cragieburn Wood," and "Roy's Wife." The first, beside its intrinsic merit, has novelty; and the last has high merit as well as great celebrity. I have the original words of a song for the last air, in the hand-writing of the lady who composed it; and they are superior to any edition of the song which the public has yet seen.†

"Highland-laddie." The old set will please a mere Scotch ear best; and the new an Italianized one. There is a third, and what Oswald calls the old "Highland-laddie," which pleases me more than either of them. It is sometimes called "Ginglin Johnnie;" it being the air of an old humorous tawdry song of that name. You will find it in the Museum, "I ha'e been at Crookieden," &c. I would advise you, in this musical quandary, to offer up your prayers to the muses for inspiring direction; and in the mean time, waiting for this direction, bestow a libation to Bacchus; and there is not a doubt but you will hit on a judicious choice. *Probatum est.*

"Auld Sir Simon" I must beg you to leave out, and put in its place "The Quaker's Wife."

"Blythe ha'e I been o'er the hill" [see p. 44], is one of the finest songs ever I made in my life, and, besides, is composed on a young lady, positively the most beautiful, lovely woman in the world. As I purpose giving you the names and designations of all my heroines, to appear in some future edition of your work, perhaps half a century hence, you must certainly include "The bonniest lass in a' the warld" in your collection.

"Dainty Davie," I have heard sung nineteen thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine times, and always with the chorus to the low part of the tune; and nothing has surprised me so much as your opinion on this subject. If it will not suit as I proposed, we will lay two of the stanzas together, and then make the chorus follow.

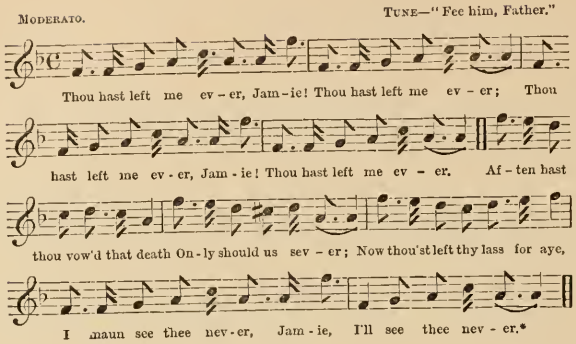
"Fee him, Father"—I inclose you Frazer's set of this tune when he plays it slow; in fact, he makes it the language of despair.‡ I shall here give you two stanzas in that style; merely to try if it will be any improvement. Were it possible, in singing, to give it half the pathos which Frazer gives it in playing, it would make an admirably pathetic song. I do not give these verses for any merit they have. I composed them at the time in which "Patie Allan's mither died, that was, about the back o' midnight;" and by the lee-side of a bowl of punch, which had overset every mortal in company, except the hautbois and the muse.

* "This alteration Mr. Thomson has adopted (or at least intended to adopt), instead of the last stanza of the original song, which is objectionable in point of delicacy."—CURRIE.

† This song is given in No. LXVI.

‡ "I had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Frazer play 'Fee him, Father,' in the exquisite style above described, at his benefit in the Theatre-royal, Edinburgh, 1822. After having for many years occupied the station of hautbois player at the orchestra of that place of amusement, he died in 1825, with the character of having been the very best performer, on this difficult but beautiful instrument, of his time in Scotland."—ROBERT CHAMBERS.

THOU HAST LEFT ME EVER.


Moderato.
Tune—"Fee him, Father."
Thou hast left me ev - er, Jam - ie! Thou hast left me ev - er; Thou
hast left me ev - er, Jam - ie! Thou hast left me ev - er. Af - ten hast
thou vow'd that death On - ly should us sev - er; Now thou'st left thy lass for aye,
I maun see thee nev - er, Jam - ie, I'll see thee nev - er.*

Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie!
  Thou hast me forsaken;
Thou hast me forsaken, Jamie!
  Thou hast me forsaken.
Thou canst love anither jo,
  While my heart is breaking:
Soon my weary een I 'll close—
  Never mair to waken, Jamie,
  Never mair to waken.

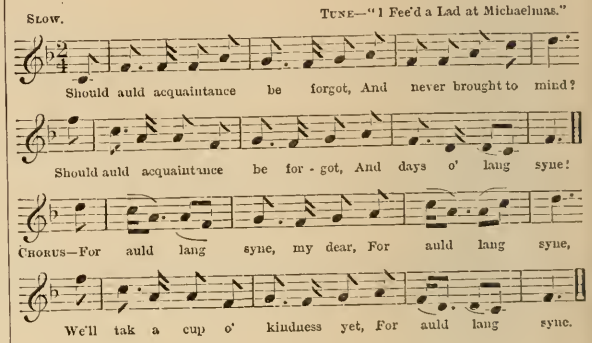
"Jockie and Jenny" I would discard, and in its place would put "There 's nae luck about the house," which has a very pleasant air, and which is positively the finest love-ballad in that style in the Scottish, or perhaps in any other language. "When she came ben she bobbet," as an air, is more beautiful than either, and in the *andante* way would unite with a charming sentimental ballad.

"Saw ye my Father?" is one of my greatest favourites. The evening before last I wandered out, and began a tender song, in what I think is its native style. I must premise that the old way, and the way to give most effect, is to have no starting note, as the fiddlers calls it, but to burst at once into the pathos. Every country girl sings—"Saw ye my father?" &c.

My song is but just begun; and I should like, before I proceed, to know your opinion of it. I have sprinkled it with the Scottish dialect, but it may be easily turned into correct English. †

"Todlin hame." Urbani mentioned an idea of his, which has long been mine, that this air is highly susceptible of pathos: accordingly, you will soon hear him at your concert try it to a song of mine in the Museum, "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon." One song more and I have done: "Auld lang syne." The air is but mediocre; but the following song, the old song of the olden times, and which has never been in print, nor even in manuscript, until I took it down from an old man's singing, is enough to recommend any air.

AULD LANG SYNE.


Slow.
Tune—"I Fee'd a Lad at Michaelmas."
Should auld acquaintance be forgot, And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be for - got, And days o' lang syne!
Chorus—For auld lang syne, my dear, For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet, For auld lang syne.

And surely ye 'll be your pint-stowp,
  And surely I 'll be mine;
And we 'll tak' a cup o' kindness yet
  For auld lang syne.
    For auld lang syne, &c.

We twa ha'e run about the braes,
  And pu'd the gowans fine;
But we 've wander'd mony a weary foot,
  Sin' auld lang syne.
    For auld lang syne, &c.

We twa ha'e paidl't i' the burn,
  Frae morning sun till dine:
But seas between us braid ha'e roar'd,
  Sin' auld lang syne.
    For auld lang syne, &c.

And there 's a hand, my trusty fiere,
  And gi'e 's a hand o' thine;
And we 'll tak' a right guid-willie waught
  For auld lang syne.
    For auld lang syne, &c.

* Mr. Thomson did not give the melody that Burns wished, but substituted the air of "My boy Tammy," altering the words to suit. The following is the song as altered by him:—

Thou hast left me ever, Tam, thou hast left me ever;
Thou hast left me ever, Tam, thou hast left me ever,
  Often hast thou vow'd that death
  Only should us sever:
Now thou'st left thy lass for aye—I must see thee never!

Thou hast me forsaken, Tam, thou hast me forsaken,
Thou hast me forsaken, Tam, thou hast me forsaken;
  Thou canst love another maid,
  While my heart is breaking!
Soon my weary eyes will close, never more to waken!

† This song appears afterwards. It begins,

"Where are the joys I ha'e met in the morning."

"WE TWA HAE PAIDL'D IN THE BURN"

Now, I suppose I have tired your patience fairly. You must, after all is over, have a number of ballads, properly so called. "Gil Morice," "Tranent Muir," "M'Pherson's Farewell," "Battle of Sheriff Muir," or "We ran and they ran" (I know the author of this charming ballad, and his history), "Hardiknute," "Barbara Allan" (I can furnish a finer set of this tune than any that has yet appeared); and besides, do you know that I really have the old tune to which "The Cherry and the Slae" was sung, and which is mentioned as a well-known air in Scotland's Complaint, a book published before poor Mary's days? It was then called "The Banks o' Helicon:" an old poem which Pinkerton has brought to light. You will see all this in Tytler's history of Scottish music. The tune, to a learned ear, may have no great merit; but it is a great curiosity. I have a good many original things of this kind.

No. XLIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

I AM happy, my dear Sir, that my ode pleases you so much. Your idea, "honour's bed," is, though a beautiful, a hackneyed idea; so, if you please, we will let the line stand as it is. I have altered the song as follows:—

BANNOCKBURN.*

ROBERT BRUCE'S ADDRESS TO HIS ARMY.

Scots, wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled;
Scots, wham Bruce has often led;
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to glorious victorie!

Now 's the day, and now 's the hour;
See the front o' battle lower;
See approach proud Edward's power;
Edward! chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Traitor! coward! turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
Sodger! hero! on wi' me!

By oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be—shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Forward! let us do, or die!

N. B.—I have borrowed the last stanza from the common stall edition of Wallace:—

> "A false usurper sinks in every foe,
> And liberty returns with every blow."

A couplet worthy of Homer. Yesterday you had enough of my correspondence. The post goes, and my head aches miserably. One comfort! I suffer so much just now in this world, for last night's joviality, that I shall escape scot-free for it in the world to come. Amen.

No. XLIV.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

12*th September*, 1793.

A THOUSAND thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your observations on the list of my songs. I am happy to find your ideas so much in unison with my own respecting the generality of the airs, as well as the verses. About some of them we differ, but there is no disputing about hobby-horses. I shall not fail to profit by the remarks you make, and to reconsider the whole with attention.

"Dainty Davie" must be sung two stanzas together and then the chorus: 'tis the proper way. I agree with you that there may be something of pathos, or tenderness at least, in the air of "Fee him, Father," when performed with feeling; but a tender cast may be given almost to any lively air, if you sing it very slowly, expressively, and with serious words. I am, however, clearly and invariably for retaining the cheerful tunes joined to their own humorous verses, wherever the verses are passable. But the sweet song for "Fee him, Father," which you began about the back of midnight, I will publish as an additional one. Mr. James Balfour, the king of good-fellows, and the best

* This well-known song was altered at Thomson's suggestion to suit the air "Lewie Gordon." Thomson afterwards saw that he had made a mistake, and reprinted it in his third volume as Burns originally wrote it, wedded to the world-known melody, "Hey, tutti taitie."

singer of the lively Scottish ballads that ever existed, has charmed thousands of companies with "Fee him, Father," and with "Todlin' hame" also, to the old words, which never should be disunited from either of these airs. Some bacchanals I would wish to discard. "Fie, let 's a' to the Bridal," for instance, is so coarse and vulgar, that I think it fit only to be sung in a company of drunken colliers: and "Saw ye my Father?" appears to me both indelicate and silly.

One word more with regard to your heroic ode. I think, with great deference to the poet, that a prudent general would avoid saying any thing to his soldiers which might tend to make death more frightful than it is. "Gory" presents a disagreeable image to the mind; and to tell them "Welcome to your gory bed," seems rather a discouraging address, notwithstanding the alternative which follows. I have shown the song to three friends of excellent taste, and each of them objected to this line, which emboldens me to use the freedom of bringing it again under your notice. I would suggest,

"Now prepare for honour's bed,
Or for glorious victorie."

No. XLV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793.

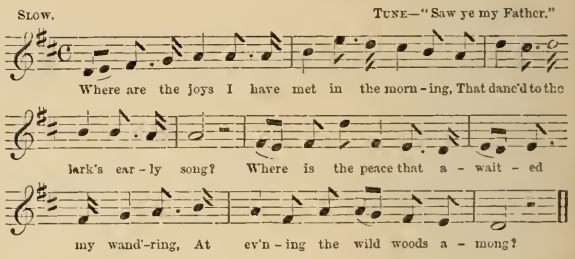
"Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" My ode pleases me so much that I cannot alter it. Your proposed alterations would, in my opinion, make it tame. I am exceedingly obliged to you for putting me on reconsidering it; as I think I have much improved it. Instead of "sodger! hero!" I will have it "Caledonian! on wi' me!"

I have scrutinized it over and over; and to the world, some way or other, it shall go as it is.* At the same time it will not in the least hurt me should you leave it out altogether, and adhere to your first intention of adopting Logan's verses.

I have finished my song to "Saw ye my Father?" and in English, as you will see. That there is a syllable too much for the expression of the air, is true; but allow me to say, that the mere dividing of a dotted crotchet into a crotchet and a quaver is not a great matter: however, in that I have no pretensions to cope in judgment with you. Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence.

The old verses have merit, though unequal, and are popular: my advice is to set the air to the old words, and let mine follow as English verses. Here they are:—

FAIR JENNY.


Slow.
Tune—"Saw ye my Father."
Where are the joys I have met in the morn-ing, That danc'd to the
lark's ear-ly song? Where is the peace that a-wait-ed
my wand'-ring, At ev'n-ing the wild woods a-mong?

No more a-winding the course of yon river,
And marking sweet flowerets so fair:
No more I trace the light footsteps of pleasure,
But sorrow and sad-sighing care.

* "Mr. Thomson has very properly adopted this song (if it may be so called) as the bard presented it to him. He has attached it to the air of 'Lewie Gordon,' and perhaps among the existing airs he could not find a better; but the poetry is suited to a much higher strain of music, and may employ the genius of some Scottish Handel, if any such should in future arise. The reader will have observed, that Burns adopted the alterations proposed by his friend and correspondent, in former instances, with great readiness; perhaps, indeed, on all indifferent occasions. In this present instance, however, he rejected them, though repeatedly urged, with determined resolution. With every respect for the judgment of Mr. Thomson and his friends, we may be satisfied that he did so. He who in preparing for an engagement attempts to withdraw his imagination from images of death, will probably have but imperfect success, and is not fitted to stand in the ranks of battle where the liberties of a kingdom are at issue. Of such men the conquerors of Bannockburn were not composed. Bruce's troops were inured to war, and familiar with all its sufferings and dangers. On the eve of that memorable day their spirits were without doubt wound up to a pitch of enthusiasm suited to the occasion—a pitch of enthusiasm at which danger becomes attractive, and the most terrific forms of death are no longer terrible. Such a strain of sentiment this heroic 'welcome' may be supposed well calculated to elevate—to raise their hearts high above fear, and to nerve their arms to the utmost pitch of moral exertion. These observations might be illustrated and supported by a reference to the martial poetry of all nations, from the spirit-stirring strains of Tyrtæus to the war-song of General Wolfe. Mr. Thomson's observation, that 'Welcome to your gory bed is a discouraging address,' seems not sufficiently considered. Perhaps, indeed, it may be admitted that the term 'gory' is somewhat objectionable, not on account of its presenting a frightful, but a disagreeable image to the mind. But a great poet, uttering his conceptions on an interesting occasion, seeks always to present a picture that is vivid, and is uniformly disposed to sacrifice the delicacies of taste on the altar of the imagination. And it is the privilege of superior genius, by producing a new association, to elevate expressions that were originally low, and thus to triumph over the deficiencies of language. In how many instances might this be exemplified from the works of our immortal Shakspeare:—

'Who would *fardels* bear,
To groan and *sweat* under a weary life:
When he himself might his *quietus* make
With a *bare bodkin?*'

It were easy to enlarge, but to suggest such reflections is probably sufficient."—Currie.

Is it that summer 's forsaken our valleys,
And grim surly winter is near?
No, no! the bees, humming round the gay roses,
Proclaim it the pride of the year.

Fain would I hide what I fear to discover,
Yet long, long too well have I known,
All that has causéd the wreck in my bosom,
Is Jenny, fair Jenny alone.

Time cannot aid me, my griefs are immortal,
Nor hope dare a comfort bestow;
Come then, enamour'd and fond of my anguish,
Enjoyment I 'll seek in my woe.

Adieu, my dear Sir! The post goes, so I shall defer some other remarks until more leisure.

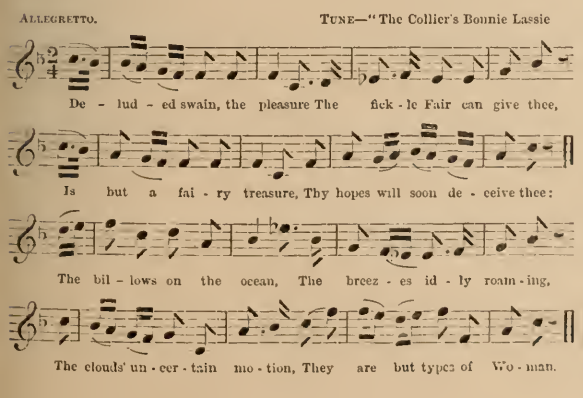
No. XLVI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1793

I HAVE been turning over some volumes of songs, to find verses whose measures would suit the airs for which you have allotted me to find English songs.

For "Muirland Willie" you have, in Ramsay's Tea-table, an excellent song, beginning, "Ah, why those tears in Nelly's eyes?" As for the "Collier's dochter," take the following old Bacchanal :—

DELUDED SWAIN, THE PLEASURE.

ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"The Collier's Bonnie Lassie
De - lud - ed swain, the pleasure The fick - le Fair can give thee,
Is but a fai - ry treasure, Thy hopes will soon de - ceive thee:
The bil - lows on the ocean, The breez - es id - ly roam - ing,
The clouds' un - cer - tain mo - tion, They are but types of Wo - man.

O! art thou not ashamed
To doat upon a feature?
If Man thou wouldst be named,
Despise the silly creature.
Go, find an honest fellow;
Good claret set before thee;
Hold on till thou art mellow,
And then to bed in glory.

The faulty line in Logan-Water, I mend thus:

"How can your flinty hearts enjoy,
The widow's tears, the orphan's cry?"

The song otherwise will pass. As to "M'Gregoira Rua-Ruth," you will see a song of mine to it, with a set of the air superior to yours, in the "Museum," vol. ii. p. 181. The song begins :—

"Raving winds around her blowing."

Your Irish airs are pretty, but they are downright Irish. If they were like the "Banks of Banna," for instance, though really Irish, yet, in the Scottish taste, you might adopt them. Since you are so fond of Irish music, what say you to twenty-five of them in an additional number? We could easily find this quantity of charming airs; I will take care that you shall not want songs; and I assure you that you would find it the most saleable of the whole. If you do not approve of "Roy's Wife," for the music's sake, we shall not insert it. "De'il tak' the wars" is a charming song: so is "Saw ye my Peggy?" "There 's nae luck about the house," well deserves a place. I cannot say that "O'er the hills and far awa'" strikes me as equal to your selection. "This is no my ain house" is a great favourite air of mine; and if you will send me a set of it, I will task my muse to her highest effort. What is your opinion of "I ha'e laid a herrin' in saut?" I like it much. Your Jacobite airs are pretty, and there are many others of the same kind pretty; but you have not room for them. You cannot, I think, insert "Fie, let 's a' to the bridal," to any other words than its own.

What pleases me as simple and *naïve*, disgusts you as ludicrous and low. For this reason, "Fie, gi'e me my coggie, Sirs," "Fie, let 's a' to the bridal," with several others of that cast, are to me highly pleasing; while "Saw ye my father, or saw ye my mother?" delights me with its descriptive simple pathos. Thus my song, "Ken ye what Meg o' the mill has gotten?" pleases myself so much, that I cannot try my hand at another song to the air; so I shall not attempt it. I know you will laugh at all this; but "ilka man wears his belt his ain gait."

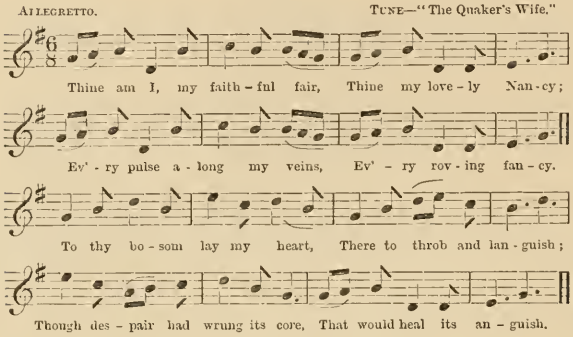
No. XLVII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

October, 1793.

YOUR last letter, my dear Thomson, was indeed laden with heavy news. Alas, poor Erskine!* The recollection that he was a coadjutor in your publication has, till now, scared me from writing to you, or turning my thoughts on composing for you.

I am pleased that you are reconciled to the air of the "Quaker's wife;" though, by the bye, an old Highland gentleman, and a deep antiquarian, tells me it is a Gaelic air, and known by the name of "Leiger m' choss." The following verses I hope will please you, as an English song to the air:—

NANCY.†

ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"The Quaker's Wife."
Thine am I, my faith-ful fair, Thine my love-ly Nan-cy;
Ev'-ry pulse a-long my veins, Ev'-ry rov-ing fan-cy.
To thy bo-som lay my heart, There to throb and lan-guish;
Though des-pair had wrung its core, That would heal its an-guish.

Take away those rosy lips,
  Rich with balmy treasure;
Turn away thine eyes of love,
  Lest I die with pleasure.
What is life when wanting love?
  Night without a morning:
Love 's the cloudless summer sun,
  Nature gay adorning.

Your objection to the English song I proposed for "John Anderson, my jo," is certainly just. The following is by an old acquaintance of mine, and I think has merit. The song was never in print, which I think is so much in your favour. The more original good poetry your Collection contains, it certainly has so much the more merit.

SONG.

BY GAVIN TURNBULL.

O condescend, dear charming maid,
  My wretched state to view:
A tender swain to love betray'd,
  And sad despair, by you.

While here all melancholy,
  My passion I deplore,
Yet urg'd by stern resistless fate,
  I love thee more and more.

I heard of love, and with disdain
  The urchin's power denied;
I laugh'd at every lover's pain,
  And mock'd them when they sigh'd.

But how my state is alter'd!
  Those happy days are o'er;
For all thy unrelenting hate,
  I love thee more and more.

O yield, illustrious beauty, yield,
  No longer let me mourn;
And though victorious in the field,
  Thy captive do not scorn.

Let generous pity warm thee,
  My wonted peace restore;
And, grateful, I shall bless thee still,
  And love thee more and more.

The following address of Turnbull's to the Nightingale will suit as an English song to the air, "There was a lass and she was fair." By the bye, Turnbull has a great many songs in MS. which I could command, if you like his manner. Possibly, as he is an old friend of mine, I may be prejudiced in his favour: but I like some of his pieces very much.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

BY G. TURNBULL.

Thou sweetest minstrel of the grove,
  That ever tried the plaintive strain,
Awake thy tender tale of love,
  And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

For though the Muses deign to aid,
  And teach him smoothly to complain,
Yet Delia, charming, cruel maid,
  Is deaf to her forsaken swain.

All day, with fashion's gaudy sons,
  In sport she wanders o'er the plain:
Their tales approves, and still she shuns
  The notes of her forsaken swain.

When evening shades obscure the sky,
  And bring the solemn hours again,
Begin, sweet bird, thy melody,
  And soothe a poor forsaken swain.

* "The Honourable A. Erskine, brother to Lord Kelly, whose melancholy death Mr. Thomson had communicated in an excellent letter, which he has suppressed."—CURRIE. He was found drowned in the Forth.

† Clarinda is said to be the subject of this song.

I shall just transcribe another of Turnbull's, which would go charmingly to "Lewie Gordon."

LAURA.

BY G. TURNBULL.

Let me wander where I will,
By shady wood or winding rill;
Where the sweetest May-born flowers
Paint the meadows, deck the bowers;
Where the linnet's early song
Echoes sweet the woods among;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

If at rosy dawn I choose,
To indulge the smiling muse;
If I court some cool retreat,
To avoid the noon-tide heat,
If beneath the moon's pale ray,
Through unfrequented wilds I stray,
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

When at night the drowsy god
Waves his sleep-compelling rod,
And to fancy's wakeful eyes
Bids celestial visions rise;
While with boundless joy I rove
Through the fairy land of love;
Let me wander where I will,
Laura haunts my fancy still.

The rest of your letter I shall answer at some other opportunity.

No. XLVIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

7th November, 1793.

MY GOOD SIR,

AFTER so long a silence, it gave me peculiar pleasure to recognize your well-known hand, for I had begun to be apprehensive that all was not well with you. I am happy to find, however, that your silence did not proceed from that cause, and that you have got among the ballads once more.

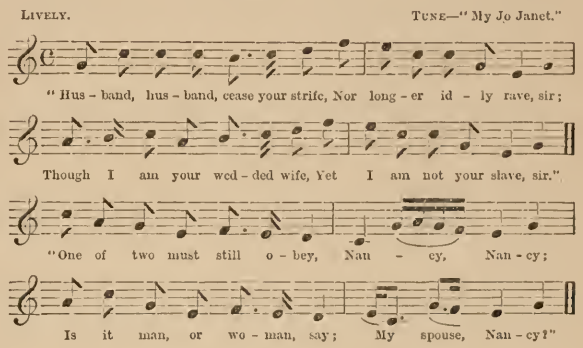
I have to thank you for your English song to "Leiger m' choss," which I think extremely good, although the colouring is warm. Your friend Mr. Turnbull's songs have doubtless considerable merit; and as you have the command of his manuscripts, I hope you may find out some that will answer, as English songs, to the airs yet unprovided.

No. XLIX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

December, 1793.

TELL me how you like the following verses to the tune of "Jo Janet:"*

HUSBAND, HUSBAND, CEASE YOUR STRIFE.

LIVELY.
TUNE—"My Jo Janet."
"Hus - band, hus - band, cease your strife, Nor long - er id - ly rave, sir;
Though I am your wed - ded wife, Yet I am not your slave, sir."
"One of two must still o - bey, Nan - cy, Nan - cy;
Is it man, or wo - man, say; My spouse, Nan - cy?"

"If 'tis still the lordly word,
Service and obedience;
I 'll desert my sov'reign lord,
And so, good b'ye, allegiance!"
"Sad will I be, so bereft,
Nancy, Nancy,
Yet I 'll try to make a shift,
My spouse, Nancy."

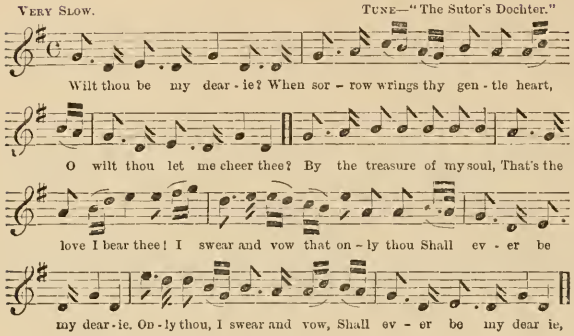
"My poor heart then break it must,
My last hour I 'm near it:
When you lay me in the dust,
Think how you will bear it."
"I will hope and trust in heaven,
Nancy, Nancy;
Strength to bear it will be given,
My spouse, Nancy."

"Well, sir, from the silent dead,
Still I 'll try to daunt you;
Ever round your midnight bed
Horrid sprites shall haunt you."

* "Jo Janet" is a humorous old Scottish song.

"I 'll wed another, like my dear
Nancy, Nancy;
Then all hell will fly for fear,
My spouse, Nancy."

WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE.*


Very Slow.
Tune—"The Sutor's Dochter."
Wilt thou be my dear - ie? When sor - row wrings thy gen - tle heart,
O wilt thou let me cheer thee? By the treasure of my soul, That's the
love I bear thee! I swear and vow that on - ly thou Shall ev - er be
my dear - ie. On - ly thou, I swear and vow, Shall ev - er be my dear ie,

Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou 'lt refuse me:
If it winna, canna be,
Thou for thine may choose me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.
Lassie, let me quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me.

No. L.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 17*th April*, 1794.

My Dear Sir,

Owing to the distress of our friend for the loss of his child, at the time of his receiving your admirable but melancholy letter, I had not an opportunity, till lately, of perusing it.† How sorry I am to find Burns saying, "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?" while he is delighting others from the one end of the island to the other. Like the hypochondriac who went to consult a physician upon his case—"Go," says the doctor, "and see the famous Carlini, who keeps all Paris in good humour." "Alas! sir," replied the patient, "I am that unhappy Carlini!"

* Composed in honour of Miss Miller of Dalswinton, a young lady of great personal beauty. The above is adapted to the first strain of an old Strathspey.

† A Letter to Mr. Cunningham, included in the General Correspondence.

Your plan for our meeting together pleases me greatly, and I trust that by some means or other it will soon take place; but your Bacchanalian challenge almost frightens me, for I am a miserable weak drinker!

Allan is much gratified by your good opinion of his talents. He has just begun a sketch from your "Cotter's Saturday Night," and if it pleases himself in the design, he will probably etch or engrave it. In subjects of the pastoral and humorous kind he is, perhaps, unrivalled by any artist living. He fails a little in giving beauty and grace to his females, and his colouring is sombre, otherwise his paintings and drawings would be in greater request.

I like the music of the "Sutor's Dochter," and will consider whether it shall be added to the last volume. Your verses to it are pretty; but your humorous English song, to suit "Jo Janet," is inimitable. What think you of the air, "Within a mile of Edinburgh?" It has always struck me as a modern English imitation, but it is said to be Oswald's, and is so much liked, that I believe I must include it. The verses are little better than namby pamby. Do you consider it worth a stanza or two?

No. LI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

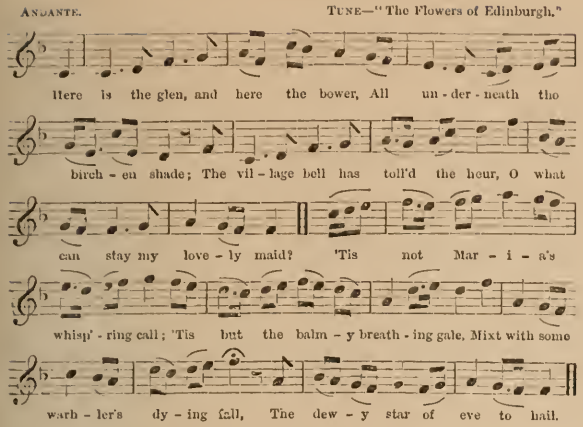
May, 1794.

My Dear Sir,

I return you the plates, with which I am highly pleased: I would humbly propose, instead of the younker knitting stockings, to put a stock and horn into his hands. A friend of mine, who is positively the ablest judge on the subject I have ever met with, and though an unknown, is yet a superior artist with the burin, is quite charmed with Allan's manner. I got him a peep of the "Gentle Shepherd;" and he pronounces Allan a most original artist of great excellence.

For my part, I look on Mr. Allan's choosing my favourite poem for his subject to be one of the highest compliments I have ever received.

I am quite vexed at Pleyel's being cooped up in France, as it will put an entire stop to our work. Now, and for six or seven months, I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by. I got an air, pretty enough, composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron of Heron, which she calls "The banks of Cree." Cree is a beautiful romantic stream; and as her Ladyship is a particular friend of mine, I have written the following song to it:—

HERE IS THE GLEN.*

ANDANTE.
TUNE—"The Flowers of Edinburgh."
Here is the glen, and here the bower, All un - der - neath tho
birch - en shade; The vil - lage bell has toll'd the hour, O what
can stay my love - ly maid? 'Tis not Mar - i - a's
whisp' - ring call; 'Tis but the balm - y breath - ing gale, Mixt with some
warb - ler's dy - ing fall, The dew - y star of eve to hail.

It is Maria's voice I hear!
So calls the woodlark in the grove,
His little faithful mate to cheer;
At once 'tis music—and 'tis love.
And art thou come! and art thou true!
O welcome dear to love and me!
And let us all our vows renew,
Along the flowery banks of Cree.

No. LII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

July, 1794.

Is there no news yet of Pleyel? Or is your work to be at a dead stop, until the allies set our modern Orpheus at liberty from the savage thraldom of democratic discords? Alas the day! And woe is me! That auspicious period, pregnant with the happiness of millions.† . . .

I have presented a copy of your songs to the daughter of a much-valued and much-honoured friend of mine, Mr. Graham of Fintry. I wrote on the blank side of the title-page the following address to the young lady:—

Here, where the Scottish muse immortal lives,
In sacred strains and tuneful numbers join'd,
Accept the gift; tho' humble he who gives,
Rich is the tribute of the grateful mind.

So may no ruffian-feeling in thy breast,
Discordant, jar thy bosom-chords among;
But peace attune thy gentle soul to rest,
Or love ecstatic wake his seraph song,

Or pity's notes, in luxury of tears,
As modest want the tale of woe reveals;
While conscious virtue all the strain endears,
And heaven-born piety her sanction seals.

No. LIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 10*th August*, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I OWE you an apology for having so long delayed to acknowledge the favour of your last. I fear it will be as you say, I shall have no more songs from Pleyel till France and we are friends. But nevertheless I am very desirous to be prepared with the poetry; and as the season approaches in which your muse of Coila visits you, I trust I shall, as formerly, be frequently gratified with the result of your amorous and tender interviews!

No. LIV.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

30*th August*, 1794.

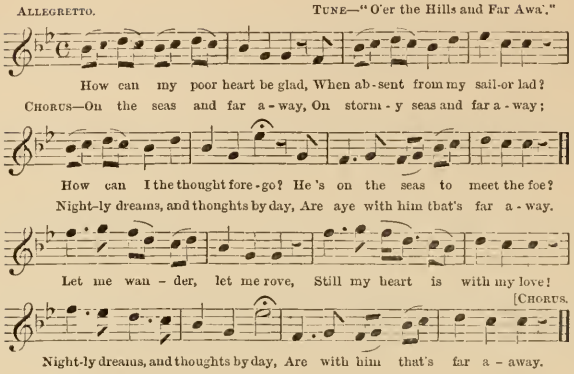
THE last evening, as I was straying out and thinking of "O'er the hills and far away," I spun the following stanza for it; but whether my spinning will deserve to be laid up in store, like the precious thread of the silk-worm, or brushed to the devil, like the vile manufacture of the spider, I leave, my dear Sir, to your usual candid criticism. I was pleased with several lines in it at first; but I own that now it appears rather a flimsy business.

This is just a hasty sketch, until I see whether it be worth a critique. We have many sailor songs; but as far as I at present recollect, they are mostly the effusions of the jovial sailor, not the wailings of his love-lorn mistress. I must here make one sweet exception—"Sweet Annie frae the sea-beach came." Now for the very song.

* Instead of "The Banks of Cree" Thomson substituted the "Flowers of Edinburgh," which is given above.

† "A portion of this letter has been left out for reasons that will be easily imagined."—CURRIE.

ON THE SEAS AND FAR AWAY.


ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"O'er the Hills and Far Awa'."
How can my poor heart be glad, When ab-sent from my sail-or lad?
CHORUS—On the seas and far a-way, On storm-y seas and far a-way;
How can I the thought fore-go? He 's on the seas to meet the foe?
Night-ly dreams, and thoughts by day, Are aye with him that's far a-way.
Let me wan-der, let me rove, Still my heart is with my love!
[CHORUS.
Night-ly dreams, and thoughts by day, Are with him that's far a-away.

When in summer's noon I faint,
As weary flocks around me pant,
Haply in this scorching sun
My sailor's thund'ring at his gun:
Bullets, spare my only joy!
Bullets, spare my darling boy!
Fate, do with me what you may,
Spare but him that 's far away!
On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
Fate, do with me what you may,
Spare but him that 's far away.

At the starless midnight hour,
When winter rules with boundless power;
As the storms the forest tear,
And thunders rend the howling air,
Listening to the doubling roar,
Surging on the rocky shore,
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that 's far away.
On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
All I can—I weep and pray,
For his weal that 's far away.

Peace, thy olive wand extend,
And bid wild war his ravage end,
Man with brother man to meet,
And as a brother kindly greet:
Then may heaven, with prosperous gales,
Fill my sailor's welcome sails,
To my arms their charge convey—
My dear lad that 's far away.
On the seas and far away,
On stormy seas and far away;
To my arms their charge convey,
My dear lad that 's far away.

I give you leave to abuse this song, but do it in the spirit of Christian meekness.

No. LV.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 16*th September*, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU have anticipated my opinion of "On the seas and far away." I do not think it one of your very happy productions, though it certainly contains stanzas that are worthy of all acceptation.

The second is the least to my liking, particularly, "Bullets, spare my only joy." Confound the bullets! It might, perhaps, be objected to the third verse, "At the starless midnight hour," that it has too much grandeur of imagery, and that greater simplicity of thought would have better suited the character of a sailor's sweetheart. The tune, it must be remembered, is of the brisk, cheerful kind. Upon the whole, therefore, in my humble opinion, the song would be better adapted to the tune, if it consisted only of the first and last verses, with the choruses.

No. LVI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

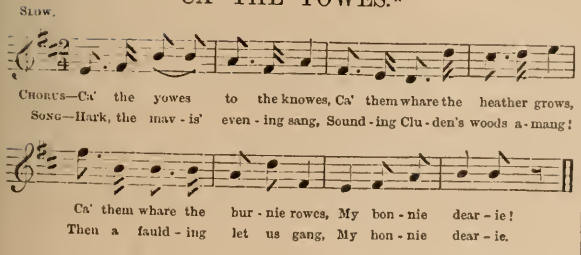
September, 1794.

I SHALL withdraw my "On the seas and far away" altogether; it is unequal, and unworthy the work. Making a poem is like begetting a son: you cannot know whether you have a wise man or a fool, until you produce him to the world to try him.

For that reason I send you the offspring of my brain, abortions and all; and as such, pray look over them, and forgive them, and burn them. I am flattered at your adopting "Ca' the yowes to the knowes," as it was owing to me that it ever saw the light. About seven years ago I was well acquainted with a worthy little fellow of a clergyman, a Mr. Clunie, who sung it charmingly; and at my request Mr. Clarke took it down from his singing. When I gave it to Johnson, I added some stanzas to the song, and mended others, but still it will not do for you. In a solitary stroll which I took to-day, I tried my hand on a few pastoral lines, following up the idea of the chorus, which I would preserve. Here it is, with all its crudities and imperfections on its head.

CA' THE YOWES TO THE KNOWES

CA' THE YOWES.*


Slow.
Chorus—Ca' the yowes to the knowes, Ca' them whare the heather grows,
Song—Hark, the mav - is' even - ing sang, Sound - ing Clu - den's woods a - mang!
Ca' them whare the bur - nie rowes, My bon - nie dear - ie!
Then a fauld - ing let us gang, My bon - nie dear - ie.

* Another version of this song will be found at page 11, vol. ii. The original tune, as given above, consists of one strain of eight bars.

We 'll gae down by Cluden side,†
Through the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

Yonder Cluden's silent towers,
Where at moonshine midnight hours,
O'er the dewy bending flowers,
Fairies dance sae cheery.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

† Cluden, or Clouden, is a tributary to the Nith.

Ghaist nor bogle shalt thou fear;
Thou 'rt to love and heaven sae dear,
Nocht of ill may come thee near,
My bonnie dearie.
Ca' the yowes, &c.

Fair and lovely as thou art,
Thou hast stown my very heart;
I can die—but canna part,
My bonnie dearie!
Ca' the yowes, &c.

I shall give you my opinion of your other newly adopted songs my first scribbling fit.

No. LVII.

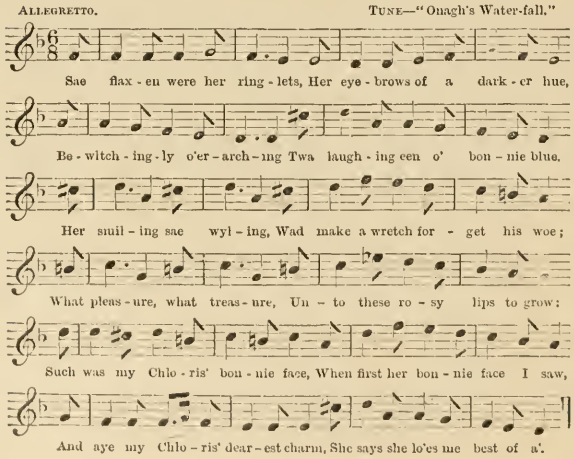
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

September, 1794.

Do you know a blackguard Irish song called "Onagh's Water-Fall?" The air is charming, and I have often regretted the want of decent verses to it. It is too much, at least for my humble rustic muse, to expect that every effort of hers shall have merit; still I think that it is better to have mediocre verses to a favourite air, than none at all. On this principle I have all along proceeded in the "Scots Musical Museum," and as that publication is at its last volume, I intend the following song, to the air above-mentioned, for that work.

If it does not suit you as an editor, you may be pleased to have verses to it that you can sing before ladies.

SHE SAYS SHE LO'ES ME BEST OF A'.*


ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"Onagh's Water-fall."
Sae flax - en were her ring - lets, Her eye - brows of a dark - er hue,
Be - witch - ing - ly o'er - arch - ing Twa laugh - ing een o' bon - nie blue.
Her smil - ing sae wyl - ing, Wad make a wretch for - get his woe;
What pleas - ure, what treas - ure, Un - to these ro - sy lips to grow:
Such was my Chlo - ris' bon - nie face, When first her bon - nie face I saw,
And aye my Chlo - ris' dear - est charm, She says she lo'es me best of a'.

* Miss Jean Lorimer.

Like harmony her motion;
Her pretty ancle is a spy,
Betraying fair proportion,
Wad mak' a saint forget the sky.
Sae warming, sae charming,
Her faultless form and gracefu' air;
Ilk feature—auld Nature
Declar'd that she could do nae mair:
Her's are the willing chains o' love,
By conquering beauty's sovereign law;
And aye my Chloris' dearest charm,
She says she lo'es me best of a'.

Let others love the city
And gaudy show at sunny noon;
Gi'e me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon
Fair beaming, and streaming,
Her silver light the boughs amang;
While falling, recalling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang:
There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows o' truth and love,
And say thou lo'est me best of a'.

Not to compare small things with great, my taste in music is like the mighty Frederick of Prussia's taste in painting: we are told that he frequently admired what the connoisseurs decried, and always without any hypocrisy confessed his admiration. I am sensible that my taste in music must be inelegant and vulgar, because people of undisputed and cultivated taste can find no merit in my favourite tunes. Still, because I am cheaply pleased, is that any reason why I should deny myself that pleasure? Many of our strathspeys, ancient and modern, give me most exquisite enjoyment, where you and other judges would probably be showing disgust. For instance, I am just now making verses for "Rothemurche's Rant," an air which puts me in raptures; and in fact, unless I be pleased with the tune, I never can make verses to it. Here I have Clarke on my side, who is a judge that I will put against any of you. "Rothemurche," he says, is an air both original and beautiful; and on his recommendation I have taken the first part of the tune for a chorus, and the fourth or last part for the song. I am but two stanzas deep in the work, and possibly you may think, and justly, that the poetry is as little worth your attention as the music.†

I have begun anew "Let me in this ae night." Do you think that we ought to retain the old chorus? I think

† "In the original MS. two stanzas of a song, beginning 'Lassie wi' the lint-white locks,' are here inserted. It will be found at full length afterwards."—CURRIE.

we must retain both the old chorus and the first stanza of the old song. I do not altogether like the third line of the first stanza, but cannot alter it to please myself. I am just three stanzas deep in it. Would you have the *denouëment* to be successful or otherwise? Should she "let him in" or not?

Did you not once propose "The Sow's tail to Geordie," as an air for your work? I am quite delighted with it; but I acknowledge that is no mark of its real excellence. I once set about verses for it, which I meant to be in the alternate way of a lover and his mistress chanting together. I have not the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Thomson's Christian name, and yours I am afraid is rather burlesque for sentiment, else I had meant to have made you the hero and heroine of the little piece.

How do you like the following epigram, which I wrote the other day on a lovely young girl's recovery from a fever? Doctor Maxwell was the physician who seemingly saved her from the grave; and to whom I address the following:—

TO DR. MAXWELL.*

ON MISS JESSIE STAIG'S RECOVERY.†

Maxwell, if merit here you crave,
That merit I deny:
You save fair Jessie from the grave?
An angel could not die.

God grant you patience with this stupid epistle!

No. LVIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

I PERCEIVE the sprightly muse is now attendant upon her favourite poet, "whose wood-notes wild" are become as enchanting as ever. "She says she lo'es me best of a'," is one of the most pleasant table songs I have seen, and henceforth shall be mine when the song is going round. I 'll give Cunningham a copy; he can more powerfully proclaim its merit. I am far from undervaluing your taste for the strathspey music: on the contrary, I think it highly animating and agreeable, and that some of the strathspeys, when graced with such verses as yours, will make very pleasing songs; in the same way that rough Christians are tempered and softened by lovely woman, without whom, you know, they had been brutes.

I am clear for having the "Sow's tail," particularly as your proposed verses to it are so extremely promising. Geordie, as you observe, is a name only fit for burlesque composition. Mrs. Thomson's name (Katharine) is not at all poetical. Retain Jeanie, therefore, and make the other Jamie, or any other that sounds agreeably.

Your "Ca' the ewes" is a precious little morceau. Indeed I am perfectly astonished and charmed with the endless variety of your fancy. Here let me ask you whether you never seriously turned your thoughts upon dramatic writing? That is a field worthy of your genius, in which it might shine forth in all its splendour. One or two successful pieces upon the London stage would make your fortune. The rage at present is for musical dramas. Few or none of those which have appeared since the "Duenna" possess much poetical merit; there is little in the conduct of the fable, or in the dialogue, to interest the audience. They are chiefly vehicles for music and pageantry. I think you might produce a comic opera in three acts, which would live by the poetry, at the same time that it would be proper to take every assistance from her tuneful sister. Part of the songs of course would be to our favourite Scottish airs; the rest might be left to the London composer—Storace for Drury-lane, or Shield for Covent-garden; both of them very able and popular musicians. I believe that interest and manœuvring are often necessary to have a drama brought on; so it may be with the namby-pamby tribe of flowery scribblers: but were you to address Mr. Sheridan himself by letter, and send him a dramatic piece, I am persuaded he would, for the honour of genius, give it a fair and candid trial. Excuse me for obtruding these hints upon your consideration.

No. LIX.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 14*th October*, 1794.

THE last eight days have been devoted to the re-examination of the Scottish collections. I have read, and sung, and fiddled, and considered till I am half blind, and wholly stupid. The few airs I have added are inclosed.

Peter Pindar has at length sent me all the songs I expected from him, which are in general elegant and beautiful. Have you heard of a London collection of Scottish airs and songs, just published by Mr. Ritson, an Englishman? I shall send you a copy. His introductory essay on the subject is curious, and evinces great reading and research, but does not decide the question as to the

* Dr. Maxwell, two years afterwards, was the poet's physician on his own death-bed.

† Miss Staig was afterwards married to Major Miller, but died young. See Note to song entitled "Jessie."

origin of our melodies; though he shows clearly that Mr. Tytler, in his ingenious dissertation, has adduced no sort of proof of the hypothesis he wished to establish, and that his classification of the airs, according to the eras when they were composed, is mere fancy and conjecture. On John Pinkerton, Esq., he has no mercy, but consigns him to damnation! He snarls at my publication, on the score of Pindar being engaged to write songs for it; uncandidly and unjustly leaving it to be inferred, that the songs of Scottish writers had been sent a-packing to make room for Peter's! Of you he speaks with some respect, but gives you a passing hit or two for daring to dress up a little some old foolish songs for the "Museum." His sets of the Scottish airs are taken, he says, from the oldest collections and best authorities. Many of them, however, have such a strange aspect, and are so unlike the sets which are sung by every person of taste, old or young, in town or country, that we can scarcely recognize the features of our favourites. By going to the oldest collections of our music, it does not follow that we find the melodies in their original state. These melodies had been preserved, we know not how long, by oral communication, before being collected and printed; and as different persons sing the same air very differently, according to their accurate or confused recollection of it, so even supposing the first collectors to have possessed the industry, the taste, and discernment to choose the best they could hear (which is far from certain), still it must evidently be a chance whether the collections exhibit any of the melodies in the state they were first composed. In selecting the melodies for my own collection, I have been as much guided by the living as by the dead. Where these differed, I preferred the sets that appeared to me the most simple and beautiful, and the most generally approved: and without meaning any compliment to my own capability of choosing, or speaking of the pains I have taken, I flatter myself that my sets will be found equally freed from vulgar errors on the one hand, and affected graces on the other.

No. LX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

19*th October*, 1794.

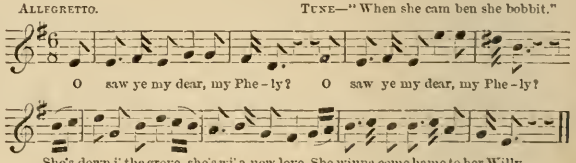
My Dear Friend,

By this morning's post I have your list, and, in general, I highly approve of it. I shall at more leisure give you a critique on the whole. Clarke goes to your town by to-day's fly, and I wish you would call on him and take his opinion in general: you know his taste is a standard. He will return here again in a week or two; so, please do not miss asking for him. One thing I hope he will do—persuade you to adopt my favourite, "Craigieburn Wood," in your selection: it is as great a favourite of his as of mine. The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and in fact (*entre nous*) is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. (Now don't put any of your squinting constructions on this, or have any clishmaclaiver about it among our acquaintances). I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of your best songs of mine. Do you think that the sober, gin-horse routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos, equal to the genius of your book? No! no!—Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs—do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe; the very one that for his own use was invented by the divinity of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman; and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion you are delighted with my verses. The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witchery of her smile the divinity of Helicon!

To descend to business; if you like my idea of, "When she cam' ben she bobbit," the following stanzas of mine, altered a little from what they were formerly when set to another air, may perhaps do instead of worse stanzas:—

SAW YE MY PHELY.*

(QUASI DICAT PHILLIS).


Allegretto.
Tune—"When she cam ben she bobbit."
O saw ye my dear, my Phe-ly? O saw ye my dear, my Phe-ly?
She's down i' the grove, she's wi' a new love, She winna come hame to her Willy.

What says she, my dear, my Phely?
What says she, my dear, my Phely?
She lets thee to wit that she has thee forgot,
And for ever disowns thee, her Willy.

O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
O had I ne'er seen thee, my Phely!
As light as the air, and fause as thou 's fair,
Thou 's broken the heart o' thy Willy.

Now for a few miscellaneous remarks. "The Posie"

* The subjects of this song were Miss Phillis M'Murdo and her "despairing swain," Stephen Clarke, the musician.

(in the "Museum") is my composition; the air was taken down from Mrs. Burns' voice. It is well known in the West country, but the old words are trash. By the bye, take a look at the tune again, and tell me if you do not think it is the original from which "Roslin Castle" is composed. The second part, in particular, for the first two or three bars, is exactly the old air. "Strathallan's Lament" is mine; the music is by our right trusty and deservedly well-beloved Allan Masterton. "Donocht-Head" is not mine; I would give ten pounds it were. It appeared first in the Edinburgh *Herald*: and came to the editor of that paper with the Newcastle post-mark on it.* "Whistle o'er the lave o't" is mine; the music said to be by a John Bruce, a celebrated violin player in Dumfries about the beginning of this century. This I know: Bruce, who was an honest man, though a red-wud Highlandman, constantly claimed it, and by all the old musical people here is believed to be the author of it.

"Andrew and his cutty gun." The song to which this is set in the "Museum" is mine, and was composed on Miss Euphemia Murray, of Lintrose, commonly and deservedly called the Flower of Strathmore.

"How long and dreary is the night!" I met with some such words in a collection of songs somewhere, which I altered and enlarged; and to please you, and to suit your favourite air, I have taken a stride or two across my room, and have arranged it anew, as you will find on the other page:—

* The reader will be curious to see this poem, so highly praised by Burns. Here it is:—

Keen blaws the wind o'er Donocht-Head,
The snaw drives snelly thro' the dale,
The Gaberlunzie tirls my sneck,
And shivering tells his waefu' tale:
"Cauld is the night, O let me in,
And dinna let your minstrel fa',
And dinna let his winding-sheet
Be naething but a wreath o' snaw.

"Full ninety winters ha'e I seen,
And pip'd where gor-cocks whirring flew,
And mony a day I 've danc'd, I ween.
To lilts which from my drone I blew."
My Eppie wak'd, and soon she cry'd,
"Get up, guidman, and let him in;
For weel ye ken the winter night
Was short when he began his din."

My Eppie's voice, O wow! it's sweet,
Even tho' she bans and scaulds a wee;
But when it's tun'd to sorrow's tale,
O, haith, it's doubly dear to me!
"Come in, auld carle, I 'll steer my fire,
I 'll make it bleeze a bonnie flame;
Your bluid is thin, ye 've tint the gate,
Ye shouldna stray sae far frae hame."

"Nae hame have I," the minstrel said,
"Sad party-strife o'erturned my ha';
And, weeping at the eve of life,
I wander thro' a wreath o' snaw."

"This affecting poem is apparently incomplete. The author need not be ashamed to avow himself. It is worthy of Burns, or of Macneill."—CURRIE.

These verses were written by William Pickering, a poor North of England poet. Another has completed the song:—

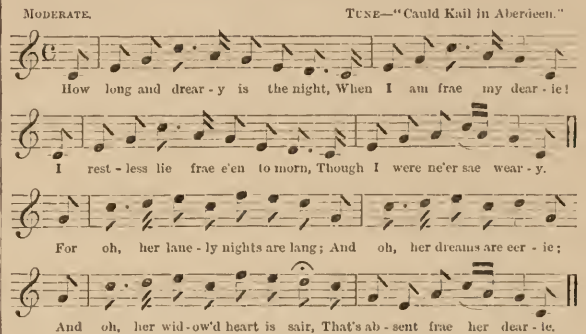
"Wae's me, auld carle! sad is your tale:
Your scrip is toom, your claithing thin:
Mine 's no the hand to steek the door,
When want and wae wad fain be in."

Wi' tottering step he reached the spence,
Whar sune the ingle bleezed fu' hie:
The auld man thought himsel' at hame,
While the tear stood twinkling in his e'e.
He took his pipes and played a spring:
But oh, it was a strain of woe;
It spake of Scotland's chiefs and king,
And wailed a nation's overthrow.

Captain Charles Gray of the Royal Marines, author of several popular lyrics, is the author of these additional verses. A fine little fellow from Anstruther, an early friend of Dr. Chalmers.

HOW LONG AND DREARY IS THE NIGHT.†

MODERATE. TUNE—"Cauld Kail in Aberdeen."

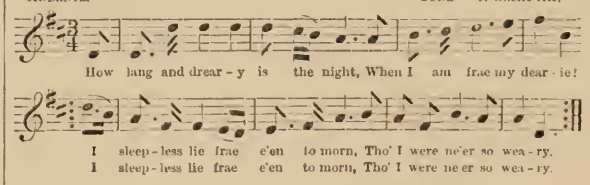

How long and drear - y is the night, When I am frae my dear - ie!
I rest - less lie frae e'en to morn, Though I were ne'er sae wear - y.
For oh, her lane - ly nights are lang; And oh, her dreams are eer - ie;
And oh, her wid - ow'd heart is sair, That's ab - sent frae her dear - ie.

When I think on the lightsome days
I spent wi' thee, my dearie;

† The earlier version of this song, which was sent to the "Museum," is here supplied, and appears to be better adapted to the words.

HOW LONG AND DREARY IS THE NIGHT.

ANDANTE. TUNE—"A Gaelic Air."


How lang and drear - y is the night, When I am frae my dear - ie!
I sleep - less lie frae e'en to morn, Tho' I were ne'er so wea - ry.
I sleep - less lie frae e'en to morn, Tho' I were ne'er so wea - ry.

When I think on the happy days
I spent wi' you, my dearie:
And now what lands between us lie,
How can I be but eerie?
And now what lands between us lie,
How can I be but eerie?

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours,
As ye were wae and weary!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie!

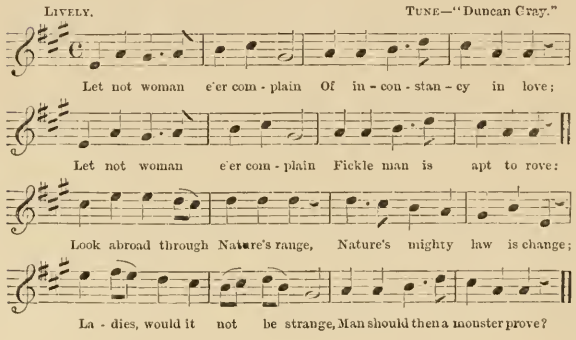
And now what seas between us roar—
How can I be but eerie?
For oh, her lanely nights, &c.

How slow ye move, ye heavy hours,
The joyless day how dreary!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie.
For oh, her lanely nights, &c.

Tell me how you like this. I differ from your idea of the expression of the tune. There is, to me, a great deal of tenderness in it. You cannot, in my opinion, dispense with a bass to your addenda airs. A lady of my acquaintance, a noted performer, plays and sings at the same time so charmingly, that I shall never bear to see any of her songs sent into the world as naked as Mr. What-d'ye-call-um has done in his London collection.*

These English songs gravel me to death. I have not that command of the language that I have of my native tongue. I have been at "Duncan Gray," to dress it in English, but all I can do is deplorably stupid. For instance:—

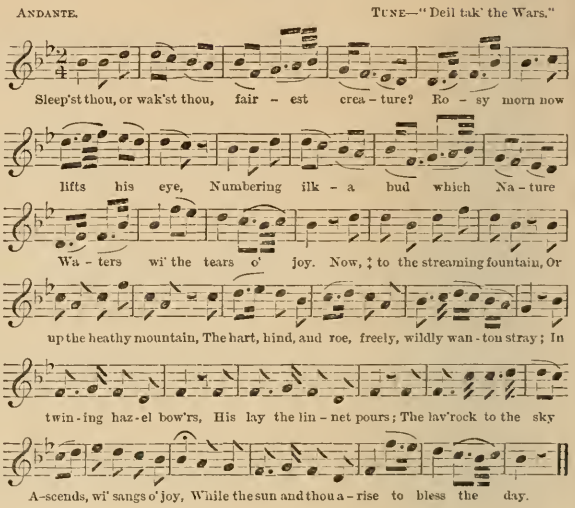
LET NOT WOMAN E'ER COMPLAIN.


LIVELY.
TUNE—"Duncan Gray."
Let not woman e'er com - plain Of in - con - stan - cy in love;
Let not woman e'er com - plain Fickle man is apt to rove:
Look abroad through Nature's range, Nature's mighty law is change;
La - dies, would it not be strange, Man should then a monster prove?

Mark the winds, and mark the skies,
Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow:
Sun and moon but set to rise,
Round and round the seasons go.
Why then ask of silly man,
To oppose great Nature's plan?
We 'll be constant while we can—
You can be no more, you know.

Since the above I have been out in the country taking a dinner with a friend, where I met with the lady whom I mentioned in the second page in this odds-and-ends of a letter.† As usual, I got into song; and returning home I composed the following:—

* Mr. Ritson. † Jean Lorimer.

THE LOVER'S MORNING SALUTE TO HIS MISTRESS.

ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Deil tak' the Wars."
Sleep'st thou, or wak'st thou, fair - est crea - ture? Ro - sy morn now
lifts his eye, Numbering ilk - a bud which Na - ture
Wa - ters wi' the tears o' joy. Now, ‡ to the streaming fountain, Or
up the heathy mountain, The hart, hind, and roe, freely, wildly wan - ton stray; In
twin - ing haz - el bow'rs, His lay the lin - net pours; The lav'rock to the sky
A-scends, wi' sangs o' joy, While the sun and thou a - rise to bless the day.

Phœbus gilding the brow o' morning,
Banishes ilk darksome shade,
Nature gladdening and adorning;
Such to me my lovely maid.
When § frae my Chloris parted,
Sad, cheerless, broken-hearted,
The night's gloomy shades, cloudy, dark, o'ercast my sky.
But when she charms my sight,
In pride of Beauty's light—
When through my very heart
Her burning glories dart;
'Tis then, 'tis then I wake to life and joy!

If you honour my verses by setting the air to them, I will vamp up the old song, and make it English enough to be understood.

I inclose you a musical curiosity, an East Indian air, which you would swear was a Scottish one. I know the

‡ MS. variation:—

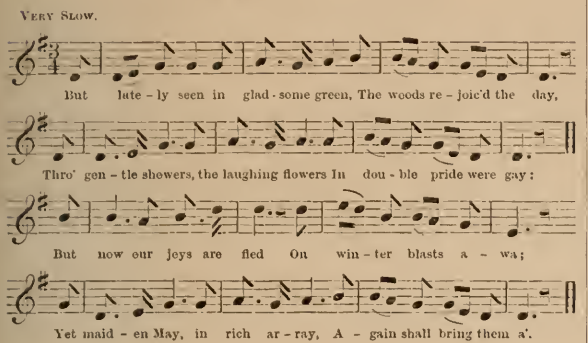
Now through the leafy woods,
And by the reeking floods,
Wild Nature's tenants freely, gladly stray;
The lintwhite in his bower,
Chants o'er the breathing flower:
The lav'rock, &c.

§ MS. variation:—

When absent frae my Fair,
The murky shades of care
With starless gloom o'ercast my sullen sky:
But when in Beauty's light
She meets my ravish'd sight,
When through my very heart
Her beaming glories dart,
'Tis then I wake to life, to light, and joy!

authenticity of it, as the gentleman who brought it over is a particular acquaintance of mine. Do preserve me the copy I send you, as it is the only one I have. Clarke has set a bass to it, and I intend putting it into the "Musical Museum." Here follow the verses I intend for it:—

THE WINTER OF LIFE.*


Very Slow.
But late-ly seen in glad-some green, The woods re-joic'd the day,
Thro' gen-tle showers, the laughing flowers In dou-ble pride were gay:
But now our joys are fled On win-ter blasts a-way;
Yet maid-en May, in rich ar-ray, A-gain shall bring them a'.

But my white pow, nae kindly thowe
  Shall melt the snaws of Age;
My trunk of eild, but buss or beild,
  Sinks in Time's wintry rage.
Oh, Age has weary days,
  And nights o' sleepless pain:
Thou golden time o' Youthfu' prime,
  Why comes thou not again?

I would be obliged to you if you would procure me a sight of Ritson's collection of English songs, which you mention in your letter. I will thank you for another information, and that as speedily as you please: whether this miserable, drawling, hotchpotch epistle has not completely tired you of my correspondence?

No. LXI.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Edinburgh, 27*th October*, 1794.

I am sensible, my dear friend, that a genuine poet can no more exist without his mistress than his meat. I wish I knew the adorable She, whose bright eyes and witching smiles have so often enraptured the Scottish bard! that I might drink her sweet health when the toast is going round. "Craigieburn Wood" must certainly be adopted into my family, since she is the object of the song; but, in the name of decency, I must beg a new chorus verse from you. "O to be lying beyond thee, dearie," is perhaps a consummation to be wished, but will not do for singing in the company of ladies. The songs in your last will do you lasting credit, and suit the respective airs charmingly. I am perfectly of your opinion with respect to the additional airs. The idea of sending them into the world naked as they were born was ungenerous. They must all be clothed and made decent by our friend Clarke.

I find I am anticipated by the friendly Cunningham in sending you Ritson's Scottish collection. Permit me, therefore, to present you with his English collection, which you will receive by the coach. I do not find his Historical Essay on Scottish song interesting. Your anecdotes and miscellaneous remarks will, I am sure, be much more so. Allan has just sketched a charming design from "Maggie Lauder." She is dancing with such spirit as to electrify the piper, who seems almost dancing too, while he is playing with the most exquisite glee. I am much inclined to get a small copy, and to have it engraved in the style of Ritson's prints.

P.S.—Pray, what do your anecdotes say concerning "Maggie Lauder?" was she a real personage, and of what rank? You would surely "spier for her, if you ca'd at Anstruther town."†

No. LXII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

November, 1794.

Many thanks to you, my dear Sir, for your present; it is a book of the utmost importance to me. I have yesterday begun my anecdotes, &c., for your work. I intend draw-

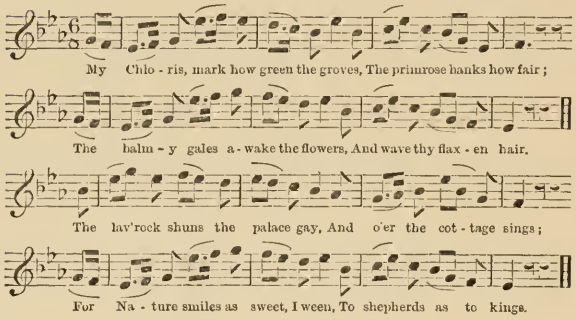
* Stenhouse says the tune is apparently borrowed from the English air of "Chevy-Chace" in Dale's collection.

† "In consequence," says Mr. Robert Chambers, "of an enthusiasm upon such subjects, the writer of these pages ["The Picture of Scotland"] did not neglect, on visiting Anstruther, to "spier for Maggie Lauder." He was pleased to find that the inhabitants of that town have not only preserved the tradition of her existence, but even know the exact place of her residence. She lived, and practised (it seems) not the most reputable profession, in the "East Green of Anster," a low street, connecting the town with the adjacent fishing village of Cellardykes. Her house was a cot of one story, and stood upon the north side of the street, at the west end of two more modern little cottages, almost opposite to a tannery. The spot is now occupied by a garden, which extends a good way back. The house itself has not existed within the memory of the present generation; but all the people concur in pointing out this as its site. It ought, however, to be mentioned that, in opposition to the popular legend regarding this renowned lady, the Anstruther family have a tradition that she was a person of condition, and connected with their ancient house."

ing it up in the form of a letter to you, which will save me from the tedious dull business of systematic arrangement. Indeed, as all I have to say consists of unconnected remarks, anecdotes, scraps of old songs, &c., it would be impossible to give the work a beginning, a middle, and an end, which the critics insist to be absolutely necessary in a work.* In my last, I told you my objections to the song you had selected for "My lodging is on the cold ground." On my visit the other day to my fair Chloris (that is the poetic name of the lovely goddess of my inspiration), she suggested an idea, which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song:—

CHLORIS.†

TUNE—"Away to bonnie Tweedside."


My Chlo - ris, mark how green the groves, The primrose banks how fair;
The balm - y gales a - wake the flowers, And wave thy flax - en hair.
The lav'rock shuns the palace gay, And o'er the cot - tage sings;
For Na - ture smiles as sweet, I ween, To shepherds as to kings.

Let minstrels sweep the skilfu' string
In lordly lighted ha':
The shepherd stops his simple reed,
Blythe, in the birken shaw.
The princely revel may survey
Our rustic dance wi' scorn;
But are their hearts as light as ours
Beneath the milk-white thorn?

The shepherd in the flow'ry glen,
In shepherd's phrase will woo:
The courtier tells a finer tale,
But is his heart as true?
These wild-wood flowers I 've pu'd, to deck
That spotless breast o' thine;
The courtier's gems may witness love—
But 'tis na love like mine.

How do you like the simplicity and tenderness of this pastoral? I think it pretty well.

I like you for entering so candidly and so kindly into the story of *ma chere Amie*. I assure you, I was never more in earnest in my life than in the account of that affair which I sent you in my last. Conjugal love is a passion which I deeply feel, and highly venerate; but, somehow, it does not make such a figure in poesy as that other species of the passion—

"Where Love is liberty, and Nature law."

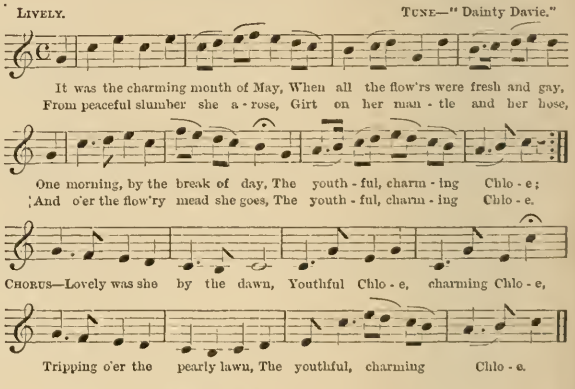
Musically speaking, the first is an instrument of which the gamut is scanty and confined, but the tones inexpressibly sweet; while the last has powers equal to all the intellectual modulations of the human soul. Still, I am a very poet in my enthusiasm of the passion. The welfare and happiness of the beloved object is the first and inviolate sentiment that pervades my soul; and whatever pleasures I might wish for, or whatever might be the raptures they would give me, yet, if they interfere with that first principle, it is having these pleasures at a dishonest price: and justice forbids and generosity disdains the purchase!

Despairing of my own powers to give you variety enough in English songs, I have been turning over old collections, to pick out songs, of which the measure is something similar to what I want; and with a little alteration so as to suit the rhythm of the air exactly, to give you them for your work. Where the songs have hitherto been but little noticed, nor have ever been set to music, I think the shift a fair one. A song which, under the same first verse, you will find in Ramsay's "Tea-table Miscellany," I have cut down for an English dress to your "Dainty Davie," as follows:—

CHLOE.

ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH SONG.

LIVELY. TUNE—"Dainty Davie."


It was the charming month of May, When all the flow'rs were fresh and gay,
From peaceful slumber she a - rose, Girt on her man - tle and her hose,
One morning, by the break of day, The youth - ful, charm - ing Chlo - e;
And o'er the flow'ry mead she goes, The youth - ful, charm - ing Chlo - e.
CHORUS—Lovely was she by the dawn, Youthful Chlo - e, charming Chlo - e,
Tripping o'er the pearly lawn, The youthful, charming Chlo - e.

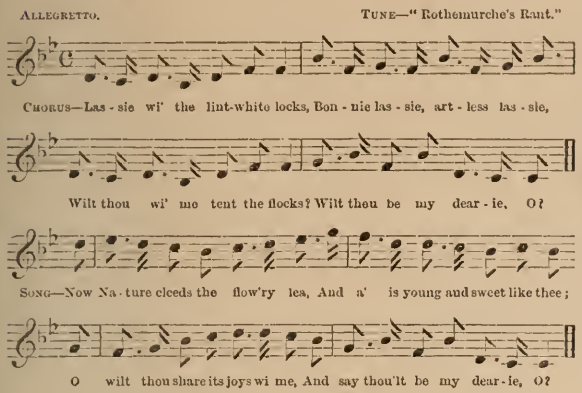
The feather'd people you might see
Perch'd all around on every tree;
In notes of sweetest melody
They hail the charming Chloe;
Till, painting gay the eastern skies,
The glorious sun began to rise,
Out-rivall'd by the radiant eyes
Of youthful, charming Chloe.
Lovely was she, &c.

* "It does not appear whether Burns completed these anecdotes, &c. Something of the kind (probably the rude draughts) was found amongst his papers, and appears elsewhere."—CURRIE.

† Miss Jean Lorimer. Burns afterwards altered the first three words of this song to "Behold my love," &c., see p. 144.

You may think meanly of this, but take a look at the bombast original, and you will be surprised that I have made so much of it. I have finished my song to "Rothemurche's Rant;" and you have Clarke to consult as to the set of the air for singing.

LASSIE WI' THE LINT-WHITE LOCKS.*


ALLEGRETTO.
TUNE—"Rothemurche's Rant."
CHORUS—Las - sie wi' the lint-white locks, Bon - nie las - sie, art - less las - sie,
Wilt thou wi' me tent the flocks? Wilt thou be my dear - ie, O?
SONG—Now Na - ture cleeds the flow'ry lea, And a' is young and sweet like thee;
O wilt thou share its joys wi me, And say thou'lt be my dear - ie, O?

And when the welcome simmer shower
Has cheer'd ilk drooping little flower,
We 'll to the breathing woodbine bower
At sultry noon, my dearie, O.
Lassie wi' the lint-white, &c.

When Cynthia lights, with silver ray,
The weary shearer's hameward way,
Through yellow waving fields we 'll stray,
And talk o' love, my dearie, O.
Lassie wi' the lint-white, &c.

And when the howling wintry blast
Disturbs my lassie's midnight rest,
Enclaspèd to my faithful breast,
I 'll comfort thee, my dearie, O.†
Lassie wi' the lint-white, &c.

This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral: the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night, are regularly rounded. If you like it, well: if not, I will insert it in the "Museum."

* Miss Jean Lorimer.

† MS. variation:—

And should the howling wintry blast
Disturb my lassie's midnight rest,
I 'll fauld thee to my faithfu' breast,
And comfort thee, my dearie, O.

No. LXIII.‡

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

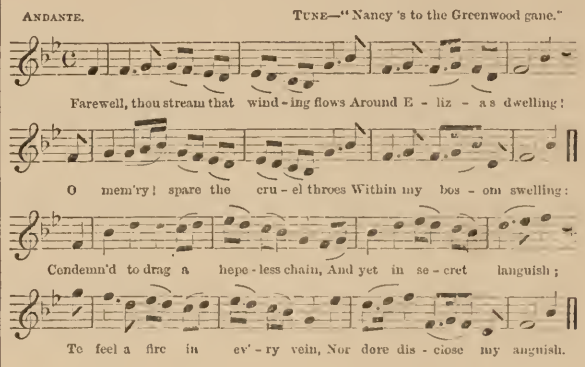
I AM out of temper that you should set so sweet, so tender an air, as "Deil tak' the wars," to the foolish old verses. You talk of the silliness of "Saw ye my father?" by heavens! the odds is gold to brass! Besides, the old song, though now pretty well modernized into the Scottish language, is originally, and in the early editions, a bungling low imitation of the Scottish manner, by that genius Tom D'Urfey: so has no pretensions to be a Scottish production. There is a pretty English song by Sheridan, in the "Duenna," to this air, which is out of sight superior to D'Urfey's. It begins—

"When sable night each drooping plant restoring."

The air, if I understand the expression of it properly, is the very native language of simplicity, tenderness, and love. I have again gone over my song to the tune as follows.§

Now for my English song to "Nancy 's to the Greenwood," &c.

FAREWELL, THOU STREAM.


ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Nancy 's to the Greenwood gane."
Farewell, thou stream that wind - ing flows Around E - liz - a's dwelling!
O mem'ry! spare the cru - el throes Within my bos - om swelling:
Condemn'd to drag a hope - less chain, And yet in se - cret languish;
To feel a fire in ev' - ry vein, Nor dare dis - close my anguish.

Love's veriest wretch, unseen, unknown,
I fain my griefs would cover:
The bursting sigh, th' unweeting groan,
Betray the hapless lover.
I know thou doom'st me to despair,
Nor wilt, nor canst relieve me;
But oh! Eliza, hear one prayer—
For pity's sake forgive me!

‡ The letter here marked No. LXIII. forms part of No. LXII. in Currie's edition.

§ See the song in its first and best dress given elsewhere, with the title of "The Lover's Morning Salute to his Mistress." Burns remarks upon it, "I could easily throw this into an English mould; but, to my taste, in the simple and the tender of the pastoral song, a sprinkling of the old Scottish has an inimitable effect."

The music of thy voice I heard,
Nor wist while it enslav'd me;
I saw thine eyes, yet nothing fear'd,
Till fears no more had sav'd me:
Th' unwary sailor thus aghast,
The wheeling torrent viewing,
'Mid circling horrors sinks at last
In overwhelming ruin.

There is an air, "The Caledonian Hunt's delight," to which I wrote a song that you will find in Johnson—"Ye banks an' braes o' bonnie Doon;" this air, I think, might find a place among your hundred, as Lear says of his knights. Do you know the history of the air? It is curious enough. A good many years ago, Mr. James Miller, writer in your good town, a gentleman whom possibly you know, was in company with our friend Clarke; and talking of Scottish music, Miller expressed an ardent ambition to be able to compose a Scots air. Mr. Clarke, partly by way of joke, told him to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord, and preserve some kind of rhythm, and he would infallibly compose a Scots air. Certain it is, that in a few days Mr. Miller produced the rudiments of an air, which Mr. Clarke, with some touches and corrections, fashioned into the tune in question. Ritson, you know, has the same story of the black keys; but this account which I have just given you Mr. Clarke informed me of several years ago. Now, to show you how difficult it is to trace the origin of our airs, I have heard it repeatedly asserted that this was an Irish air; nay, I met with an Irish gentleman who affirmed he had heard it in Ireland among the old women; while, on the other hand, a countess informed me that the first person who introduced the air into this country was a baronet's lady of her acquaintance, who took down the notes from an itinerant piper in the Isle of Man. How difficult, then, to ascertain the truth respecting our poesy and music! I myself have lately seen a couple of ballads sung through the streets of Dumfries, with my name at the head of them as the author, though it was the first time I had ever seen them.

I thank you for admitting "Craigieburn Wood;" and I shall take care to furnish you with a new chorus. In fact, the chorus was not my work, but a part of some old verses to the air. If I can catch myself in a more than ordinarily propitious moment, I shall write a new "Craigieburn Wood" altogether. My heart is much in the theme.

I am ashamed, my dear fellow, to make the request; 'tis dunning your generosity: but in a moment when I had forgotten whether I was rich or poor, I promised Chloris a copy of your songs. It wrings my honest pride to write you this: but an ungracious request is doubly so by a tedious apology. To make you some amends, as soon as I have extracted the necessary information out of them, I will return you Ritson's volumes.

The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection, and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much. Lucky it is for your patience that my paper is done, for when I am in a scribbling humour I know not when to give over.

No. LXIV.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

15*th November*, 1794.

My Good Sir,

Since receiving your last I have had another interview with Mr. Clarke, and a long consultation. He thinks the "Caledonian Hunt" is more Bacchanalian than amorous in its nature, and recommends it to you to match the air accordingly. Pray, did it ever occur to you how peculiarly well the Scottish airs are adapted for verses in the form of a dialogue? The first part of the air is generally low, and suited for a man's voice; and the second part in many instances cannot be sung, at concert pitch, but by a female voice. A song thus performed makes an agreeable variety, but few of ours are written in this form: I wish you would think of it in some of those that remain. The only one of the kind you have sent me is admirable, and will be a universal favourite.

Your verses for "Rothemurche" are so sweetly pastoral, and your serenade to Chloris, for "Deil tak' the wars," so passionately tender, that I have sung myself into raptures with them. Your song for "My lodging is on the cold ground" is likewise a diamond of the first water: I am quite dazzled and delighted by it. Some of your Chlorises, I suppose, have flaxen hair, from your partiality for this colour; else we differ about it; for I should scarcely conceive a woman to be a beauty, on reading that she had lint-white locks!

"Farewell thou stream that winding flows," I think excellent, but it is much too serious to come after "Nancy:" at least it would seem an incongruity to provide the same air with merry Scottish and melancholy English verses! The more that the two sets of verses resemble each other, in their general character, the better. Those you have manufactured for "Dainty Davie" will answer charmingly. I am happy to find you have begun your anecdotes: I care not how long they be, for it is impossible that any thing from your pen can be tedious. Let me beseech you

"OH PHILLY, HAPPY BE THAT DAY,
WHEN ROVING THRO' THE GATHER'D HAY."

not to use ceremony in telling me when you wish to present any of your friends with the songs: the next carrier will bring you three copies, and you are as welcome to twenty as to a pinch of snuff.

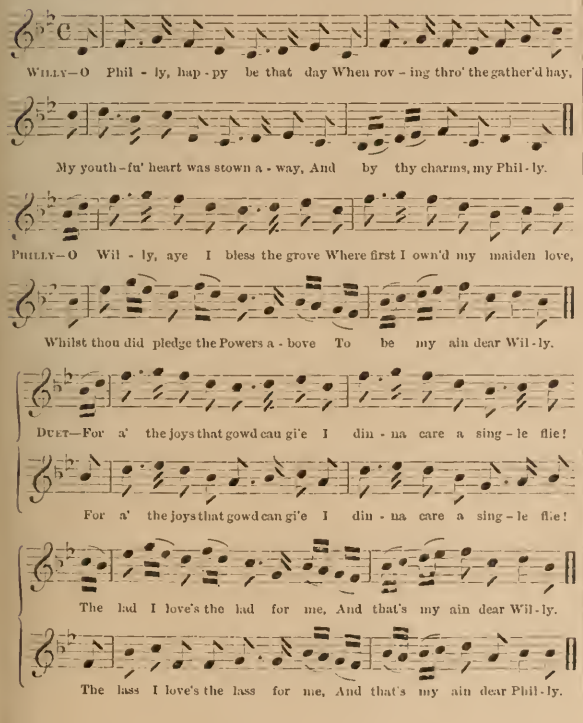
No. LXV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

19*th November*, 1794.

You see, my dear Sir, what a punctual correspondent I am; though indeed you may thank yourself for the *tedium* of my letters, as you have so flattered me on my horsemanship with my favourite hobby, and have praised the grace of his ambling so much, that I am scarcely ever off his back. For instance, this morning, though a keen blowing frost, in my walk before breakfast I finished my duet, which you were pleased to praise so much. Whether I have uniformly succeeded I will not say; but here it is for you, though it is not an hour old.

O PHILLY, HAPPY BE THAT DAY.

Tune—"The Sow's Tail to Geordie."

Willy—O Phil - ly, hap - py be that day When rov - ing thro' the gather'd hay,
My youth - fu' heart was stown a - way, And by thy charms, my Phil - ly.
Philly—O Wil - ly, aye I bless the grove Where first I own'd my maiden love,
Whilst thou did pledge the Powers a - bove To be my ain dear Wil - ly.
Duet—For a' the joys that gowd can gi'e I din - na care a sing - le flie!
For a' the joys that gowd can gi'e I din - na care a sing - le flie!
The lad I love's the lad for me, And that's my ain dear Wil - ly.
The lass I love's the lass for me, And that's my ain dear Phil - ly.

Willy. As songsters of the early year
Are ilka day mair sweet to hear,
So ilka day to me mair dear
And charming is my Philly.
Philly. As on the brier the budding rose
Still richer breathes and fairer blows,
So in my tender bosom grows
The love I bear my Willy.
Both. For a' the joys, &c.

Willy. The milder sun and bluer sky,
That crown my harvest cares wi' joy,
Were ne'er sae welcome to my eye
As is a sight o' Philly.
Philly. The little swallow's wanton wing,
Tho' wafting o'er the flowery spring,
Did ne'er to me sic tidings bring,
As meeting o' my Willy.
Both. For a' the joys, &c.

Willy. The bee that thro' the sunny hour
Sips nectar in the opening flower,
Compar'd wi' my delight is poor,
Upon the lips o' Philly.
Philly. The woodbine in the dewy weet,
When evening shades in silence meet,
Is nocht sae fragrant or sae sweet
As is a kiss o' Willy.
Both. For a' the joys, &c.

Willy. Let fortune's wheel at random rin,
And fools may tyne, and knaves may win;
My thoughts are a' bound up in ane,
And that 's my ain dear Philly.
Philly. What 's a' the joys that gowd can gi'e?
I dinna care a single flie;
The lad I love 's the lad for me,
And that 's my ain dear Willy.
Both. For a' the joys, &c.

Tell me honestly how you like it; and point out whatever you think faulty.

I am much pleased with your idea of singing our songs in alternate stanzas, and regret that you did not hint it to me sooner. In those that remain, I shall have it in my eye. I remember your objections to the name Philly: but it is the common abbreviation of Phillis. Sally, the only other name that suits, has to my ear a vulgarity about it, which unfits it for any thing except burlesque. The legion of Scottish poetasters of the day, whom your brother editor, Mr. Ritson, ranks with me as my coevals, have always mistaken vulgarity for simplicity: whereas, simplicity is as much *eloignée* from vulgarity, on the one hand, as from affected point and puerile conceit on the other.

I agree with you as to the air, "Craigieburn Wood,"

that a chorus would in some degree spoil the effect, and shall certainly have none in my projected song to it. It is not, however, a case in point with "Rothemurche;" there, as in "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," a chorus goes to my taste well enough. As to the chorus going first, that is the case with "Roy's Wife," as well as "Rothemurche." In fact, in the first part of both tunes the rhythm is so peculiar and irregular, and on that irregularity depends so much of their beauty, that we must e'en take them with all their wildness, and humour the verse accordingly. Leaving out the starting note in both tunes has I think, an effect that no regularity could counterbalance the want of.

Try, { *O Roy's* Wife of Aldivalloch. / *O Lassie* wi' the lint-white locks.

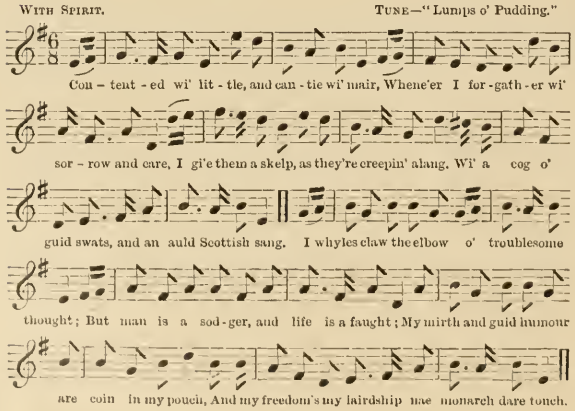
and

compare with, { *Roy's* Wife of Aldivalloch. / *Lassie* wi' the lint-white locks.

Does not the tameness of the prefixed syllable strike you? In the last case, with the true furor of genius, you strike at once into the wild originality of the air; whereas, in the first insipid method, it is like the grating screw of the pins before the fiddle is brought into tune. This is my taste; if I am wrong, I beg pardon of the *cognoscenti*.

"The Caledonian Hunt" is so charming, that it would make any subject in a song go down; but pathos is certainly its native tongue. Scottish Bacchanalians we certainly want, though the few we have are excellent. For instance, "Todlin hame" is, for wit and humour, an unparalleled composition; and "Andrew and his cutty Gun" is the work of a master. By the way, are you not quite vexed to think that those men of genius, for such they certainly were, who composed our fine Scottish lyrics, should be unknown? It has given me many a heart-ache. Apropos to Bacchanalian songs in Scottish; I composed one yesterday for an air I like much—"Lumps o' pudding."

CONTENTED WI' LITTLE.


With Spirit.
Tune—"Lumps o' Pudding."
Con – tent - ed wi' lit - tle, and can - tie wi' mair, Whene'er I for - gath - er wi'
sor – row and care, I gi'e them a skelp, as they're creepin' alang. Wi' a cog o'
guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang. I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome
thought; But man is a sod - ger, and life is a faught; My mirth and guid humour
are coin in my pouch, And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch.

A towmond o' trouble, should that be my fa',
A night o' guid fellowship southers it a':
When at the blythe end o' our journey at last,
Wha the de'il ever thinks o' the road he has past?
Blind chance, let her snapper and stoyte on her way;
Be 't to me, be 't frae me, e'en let the jade gae:
Come ease or come travail, come pleasure or pain,
My warst word is —"Welcome, and welcome again!"

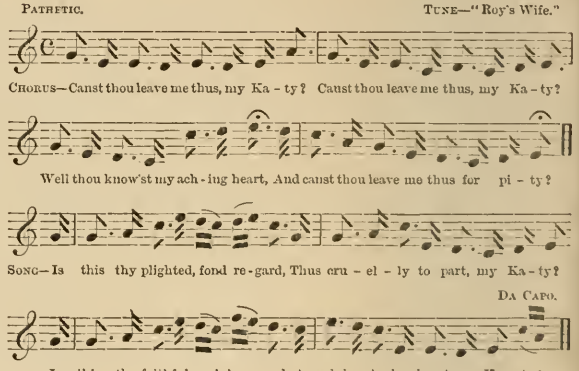
If you do not relish this air, I will send it to Johnson.

No. LXVI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

Since yesterday's penmanship, I have framed a couple of English stanzas, by way of an English song to "Roy's Wife." You will allow me that, in this instance, my English corresponds in sentiment with the Scottish :—

CANST THOU LEAVE ME THUS, MY KATY.*


Pathetic.
Tune—"Roy's Wife."
Chorus—Canst thou leave me thus, my Ka - ty? Canst thou leave me thus, my Ka - ty?
Well thou know'st my ach - ing heart, And canst thou leave me thus for pi - ty?
Song—Is this thy plighted, fond re - gard, Thus cru - el - ly to part, my Ka - ty?
Da Capo.
Is this thy faithful swain's re-ward, An ach-ing, broken heart, my Ka - ty!

* "To this address, in the character of a forsaken lover, a reply was found, on the part of the lady, among the MSS. of our bard, evidently in a female hand-writing. The temptation to give it to the public is irresistible; and if in so doing offence should be given to the fair authoress, the beauty of her verses must plead our excuse:—

'Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,
For, ah! thou know'st na every pang
Wad wring my bosom shouldst thou leave me.

Tell me that thou yet art true,
And a' my wrongs shall be forgiven,
And when this heart proves fause to thee,
You sun shall cease its course in heaven.

Farewell! and ne'er such sorrows tear
That fickle heart of thine, my Katy!
Thou may'st find those will love thee dear—
But not a love like mine, my Katy.
Canst thou leave me thus, my Katy, &c.

Well! I think this, to be done in two or three turns across my room, and with two or three pinches of Irish blackguard, is not so far amiss. You see I am determined to have my quantum of applause from somebody.

Tell my friend Allan (for I am sure that we only want the trifling circumstance of being known to one another, to be the best friends on earth), that I much suspect he has, in his plates, mistaken the figure of the stock and horn. I have, at last, gotten one; but it is a very rude instrument. It is composed of three parts—the stock, which is the hinder thigh-bone of a sheep, such as you see in a mutton ham; the horn, which is a common Highland cow's horn cut off at the smaller end, until the aperture be large enough to admit the stock to be pushed up through the horn until it be held by the thicker end of the thigh-bone; and lastly, an oaten reed exactly cut and notched like that which you see every shepherd boy have, when the corn stems are green and full grown. The reed is not made fast in the bone, but is held by the lips, and plays loose in the smaller end of the stock; while the stock, with the horn hanging on its larger end, is held by the hands in playing. The stock has six or seven ventages on the upper side, and one back ventage, like the common flute. This of mine was made by a man from the braes of Athole, and is exactly what the shepherds were wont to use in that country.

However, either it is not quite properly bored in the holes, or else we have not the art of blowing it rightly; for we can make little of it. If Mr. Allan chooses, I will send him a sight of mine; as I look on myself to be a kind of brother brush with him. "Pride in poets is nae sin;" and I will say it, that I look on Mr. Allan and Mr. Burns to be the only genuine and real painters of Scottish costume in the world.

'But to think I was betrayed,
That falsehood e'er our loves should sunder!
To take the flow'ret to my breast,
And find the guilefu' serpent under.
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me, &c.

'Could I hope thou 'dst ne'er deceive,
Celestial pleasures might I choose 'em,
I 'd slight, nor seek in other spheres
That heaven I 'd find within thy bosom.
Stay, my Willie—yet believe me,' &c.

"It may amuse the reader to be told, that on this occasion the gentleman and the lady have exchanged the dialects of their respective countries. The Scottish Bard makes his address in pure English; the reply on the part of the lady, in the Scottish dialect, is, if we mistake not, by a young and beautiful Englishwoman."—CURRIE.

No. LXVII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

28th November, 1794.

I ACKNOWLEDGE, my dear Sir, you are not only the most punctual, but the most delectable correspondent I ever met with. To attempt flattering you never entered my head; the truth is, I look back with surprise at my impudence in so frequently nibbling at lines and couplets of your incomparable lyrics, for which, perhaps, if you had served me right, you would have sent me to the devil. On the contrary, however, you have all along condescended to invite my criticism with so much courtesy, that it ceases to be wonderful if I have sometimes given myself the airs of a reviewer. Your last budget demands unqualified praise: all the songs are charming, but the duet is a *chef d'œuvre*. "Lumps o' pudding" shall certainly make one of my family dishes; you have cooked it so capitally that it will please all palates. Do give us a few more of this cast when you find yourself in good spirits; these convivial songs are more wanted than those of the amorous kind, of which we have great choice. Besides, one does not often meet with a singer capable of giving the proper effect to the latter, while the former are easily sung, and acceptable to every body. I participate in your regret that the authors of some of our best songs are unknown: it is provoking to every admirer of genius.

I mean to have a picture painted from your beautiful ballad, "The Soldier's Return," to be engraved for one of my frontispieces. The most interesting point of time appears to me when she first recognizes her ain dear Willie, "She gaz'd, she redden'd like a rose." The three lines immediately following are, no doubt, more impressive on the reader's feelings; but were the painter to fix on these, then you'll observe the animation and anxiety of her countenance is gone, and he could only represent her fainting in the soldier's arms. But I submit the matter to you, and beg your opinion.

Allan desires me to thank you for your accurate description of the stock and horn, and for the very gratifying compliment you pay him in considering him worthy of standing in a niche by the side of Burns in the Scottish Pantheon. He has seen the rude instrument you describe, so does not want you to send it; but wishes to know whether you believe it to have ever been generally used as a musical pipe by the Scottish shepherds, and when, and in what part of the country chiefly. I doubt much if it was capable of any thing but routing and roaring. A friend of mine says he remembers to have heard one in his younger days, made of wood instead of your bone, and that the sound was abominable.

Do not, I beseech you, return any books.

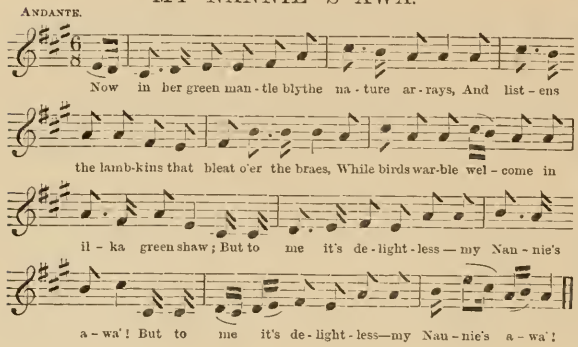
No. LXVIII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

December, 1794.

It is, I assure you, the pride of my heart to do any thing to forward, or add to the value of your book; and as I agree with you that the Jacobite song in the "Museum," to "There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," would not so well consort with Peter Pindar's excellent love-song to that air, I have just framed for you the following:—

MY NANNIE 'S AWA.*


ANDANTE.
Now in her green man - tle blythe na - ture ar - rays, And list - ens
the lamb-kins that bleat o'er the braes, While birds war-ble wel - come in
il - ka green shaw; But to me it's de - light - less — my Nan - nie's
a - wa'! But to me it's de - light - less—my Nan - nie's a - wa'!

The snaw-drap and primrose our woodlands adorn,
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,
They mind me o' Nannie—and Nannie 's awa'!

Thou lav'rock that springs frae the dews of the lawn,
The shepherd to warn o' the grey-breaking dawn,
And thou mellow mavis that hails the night fa',
Give over for pity—my Nannie 's awa'!

Come, Autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and grey,
And soothe me wi' tidings o' nature's decay:
The dark, dreary winter, and wild-driving snaw,
Alane can delight me—now Nannie 's awa.

How does this please you? As to the point of time for the expression, in your proposed print from my "Sodger's Return," it must certainly be at—"She gaz'd." The interesting dubiety and suspense taking possession of her countenance, and the gushing fondness, with a mixture of roguish playfulness in his, strike me as things of which a master will make a great deal. In great haste, but in great truth, yours.

* Clarinda is said to have been the subject of this lyric. Burns composed it for the tune "There 'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame," or "There 's few guid fellows when Jamie's awa'"—see vol. i. page 186; we, however, substitute the universally adopted melody. Thomson set the words to the Irish air "Coolun."

No. LXIX.

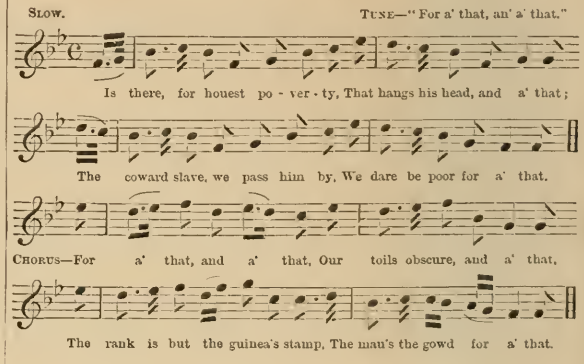
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

January, 1795.

I fear for my songs; however a few may please, yet originality is a coy feature in composition, and in a multiplicity of efforts in the same style disappears altogether. For these three thousand years we poetic folks have been describing the spring, for instance; and as the spring continues the same, there must soon be a sameness in the imagery, &c., of these said rhyming folks.

A great critic (Aikin) on songs says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song, but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme:—

FOR A' THAT, AND A' THAT.


SLOW.
TUNE—"For a' that, an' a' that."
Is there, for honest po - ver - ty, That hangs his head, and a' that;
The coward slave, we pass him by, We dare be poor for a' that.
CHORUS—For a' that, and a' that, Our toils obscure, and a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp, The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, and a' that;
Gi'e fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man 's a man for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that!

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He 's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
His riband, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that!

A king can mak' a belted knight,†
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man 's aboon his might:
Guid faith, he maunna fa' that!

† MS. variation:

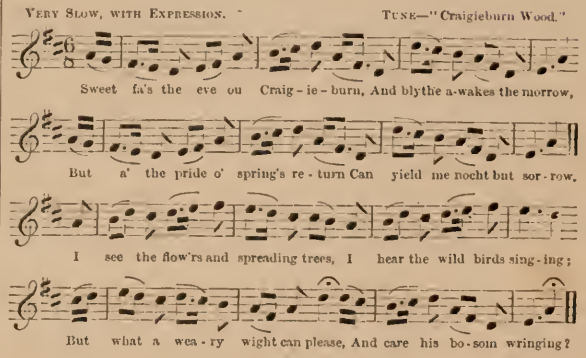
A prince can mak' a belted knight.

For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may—
As come it will for a' that—
That sense and worth o'er a' the earth
May bear the gree, and a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
It 's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that!

I do not give you the foregoing song for your book, but merely by way of *vive la bagatelle;* for the piece is not really poetry. How will the following do for "Craigieburn wood?"

CRAIGIEBURN WOOD.*

VERY SLOW, WITH EXPRESSION. TUNE—"Craigieburn Wood."

Sweet fa's the eve on Craig - ie - burn, And blythe a-wakes the morrow,
But a' the pride o' spring's re - turn Can yield me nocht but sor - row.
I see the flow'rs and spreading trees, I hear the wild birds sing - ing;
But what a wea - ry wight can please, And care his bo - som wringing?

* Burns sent to Johnson's "Museum" another song similar to the above, with the same title, see vol. i. p. 195.

Fain, fain would I my griefs impart,
Yet darena for your anger;
But secret love will break my heart,
If I conceal it langer.
If thou refuse to pity me,
If thou shalt love anither,
When yon green leaves fade frae the tree,
Around my grave they 'll wither.

Farewell! God bless you.

No. LXX.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 30*th January*, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

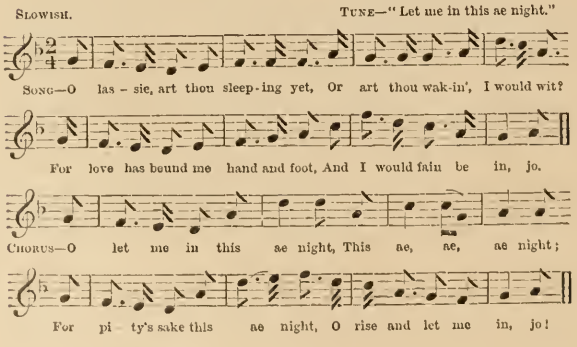
I THANK you heartily for "Nannie 's awa'," as well as for "Craigieburn," which I think a very comely pair. Your observation on the difficulty of original writing in a number of efforts in the same style, strikes me very forcibly; and it has again and again excited my wonder to find you continually surmounting this difficulty, in the many delightful songs you have sent me. Your *vive la bagatelle* song, "For a' that," shall undoubtedly be included in my list.

No. LXXI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

February, 1795.

HERE is another trial at your favourite air:—

O, LASSIE, ART THOU SLEEPING YET.*

SLOWISH.
TUNE—"Let me in this ae night."
SONG—O las - sie, art thou sleep-ing yet, Or art thou wak-in', I would wit?
For love has bound me hand and foot, And I would fain be in, jo.
CHORUS—O let me in this ae night, This ae, ae, ae night;
For pi - ty's sake this ae night, O rise and let me in, jo!

* A song in Herd's collection supplied the poet with the materials of this lyric. He has altered it for the better.

Thou hear'st the winter wind and weet,
Nae star blinks through the driving sleet:
Tak' pity on my weary feet,
And shield me frae the rain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

The bitter blast that round me blaws
Unheeded howls, unheeded fa's;
The cauldness o' thy heart 's the cause
Of a' my grief and pain, jo.
O let me in, &c.

HER ANSWER.

O TELL na me o' wind an' rain,
Upbraid na me wi' cauld disdain,
Gae back the gait ye cam' again,
I winna let ye in, jo.
I tell you now this ae night,
This ae, ae, ae night;
And ance for a' this ae night,
I winna let ye in, jo.

The snellest blast, at mirkest hours,
That round the pathless wand'rer pours,
Is nocht to what poor she endures,
That 's trusted faithless man, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

The sweetest flower that deck'd the mead,
Now trodden like the vilest weed;
Let simple maid the lesson read,
The weird may be her ain, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

The bird that charm'd his summer-day,
Is now the cruel fowler's prey;
Let witless, trusting, woman say
How aft her fate 's the same, jo.
I tell you now, &c.

I do not know whether it will do.

No. LXXII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

ECCLEFECHAN, 7*th February*, 1795.

MY DEAR THOMSON,

YOU cannot have any idea of the predicament in which I write to you. In the course of my duty as

Supervisor (in which capacity I have acted of late), I came yesternight to this unfortunate, wicked, little village.* I have gone forward, but snows of ten feet deep have impeded my progress; I have tried to "gae back the gait I cam' again," but the same obstacle has shut me up within insuperable bars. To add to my misfortune, since dinner a scraper has been torturing catgut, in sounds that would have insulted the dying agonies of a sow under the hands of a butcher, and thinks himself, on that very account, exceeding good company. In fact, I have been in a dilemma, either to get drunk, to forget these miseries; or to hang myself to get rid of them; like a prudent man (a character congenial to my every thought, word, and deed), I, of two evils, have chosen the least, and am—very drunk at your service!

I wrote to you yesterday from Dumfries. I had not time then to tell you all I wanted to say; and, Heaven knows, at present I have not capacity.

Do you know an air—I am sure you must know it—"We 'll gang nae mair to yon town?" I think, in slowish time, it would make an excellent song. I am highly delighted with it; and if you should think it worthy of your attention, I have a fair dame in my eye to whom I would consecrate it.

As I am just going to bed, I wish you a good night.

No. LXXIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

25th February, 1795.

I HAVE to thank you, my dear Sir, for two epistles, one containing "Let me in this ae night;" and the other from Ecclefechan, proving that, drunk or sober, your "mind is never muddy." You have displayed great address in the above song. Her answer is excellent, and at the same time takes away the indelicacy that otherwise would have attached to his entreaties. I like the song as it now stands very much.

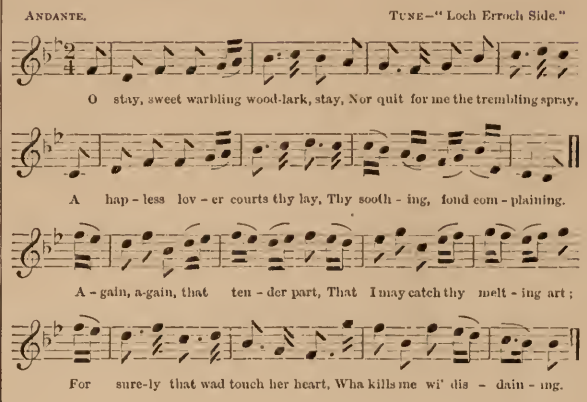
I had hopes you would be arrested some days at Ecclefechan, and be obliged to beguile the tedious forenoons by song-making. It will give me pleasure to receive the verses you intend for "O wat ye wha 's in yon town?"

* Ecclefechan is a small town in Annandale, where Thomas Carlyle was born, December, 1795. "The bard must have been tipsy indeed," says Currie, who was a native of the neighbourhood, "to abuse sweet Ecclefechan at this rate."

No. LXXIV.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

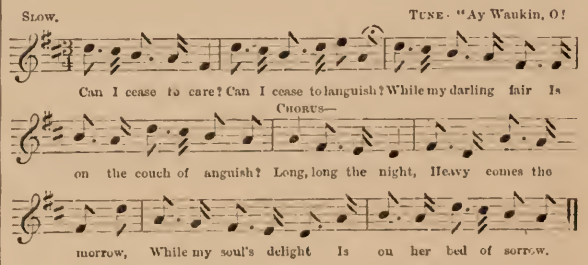
May, 1795.

ADDRESS TO THE WOOD-LARK.

ANDANTE.
TUNE—"Loch Erroch Side."
O stay, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay, Nor quit for me the trembling spray,
A hap - less lov - er courts thy lay, Thy sooth - ing, fond com - plaining.
A - gain, a-gain, that ten - der part, That I may catch thy melt - ing art;
For sure-ly that wad touch her heart, Wha kills me wi' dis - dain - ing.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,
And heard thee as the careless wind?
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd,
Sic notes o' woe could wauken.
Thou tells o' never-ending care;
O' speechless grief, and dark despair;
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair!
Or my poor heart is broken!

Let me know, your very first leisure, how you like this song.

ON CHLORIS BEING ILL.†


SLOW.
TUNE—"Ay Waukin, O!
Can I cease to care? Can I cease to languish? While my darling fair Is
CHORUS—
on the couch of anguish? Long, long the night, Heavy comes the
morrow, While my soul's delight Is on her bed of sorrow.

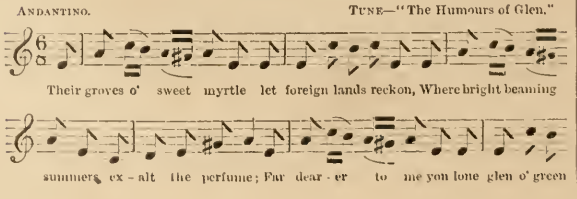
† Jean Lorimer.

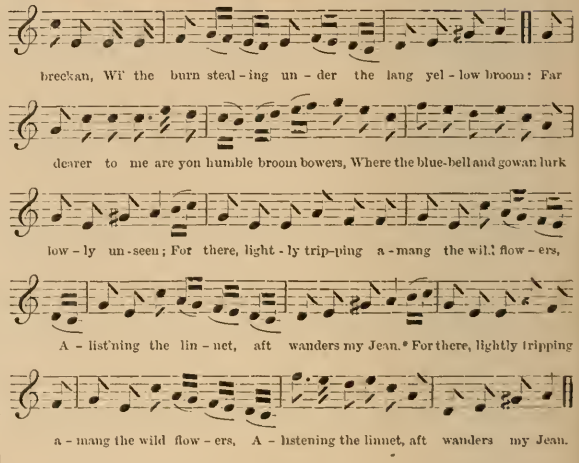
Every hope is fled,
  Every fear is terror;
Slumber even I dread,
  Every dream is horror.
    Long, long the night, &c.

Hear me, Pow'rs divine!
  Oh, in pity hear me!
Take aught else of mine,
  But my Chloris spare me!
    Long, long the night, &c.

How do you like the foregoing? The Irish air, "Humours of Glen," is a great favourite of mine, and as, except the silly stuff in the "Poor Soldier," there are not any decent verses for it, I have written for it as follows:—

CALEDONIA.

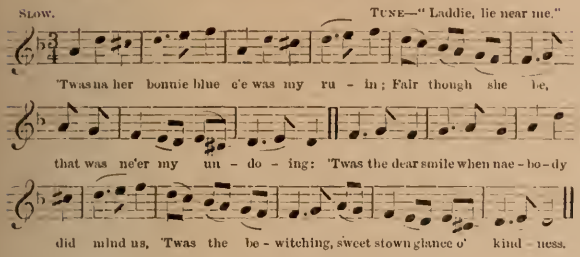
ANDANTINO. TUNE—"The Humours of Glen."

Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon, Where bright beaming
summers ex - alt the perfume; Far dear - er to me you lone glen o' green


breckan, Wi' the burn steal - ing un - der the lang yel - low broom: Far
dearer to me are you humble broom bowers, Where the blue-bell and gowan lurk
low - ly un - seen; For there, light - ly trip-ping a - mang the wild flow - ers,
A - list'ning the lin - net, aft wanders my Jean.* For there, lightly tripping
a - mang the wild flow - ers, A - listening the linnet, aft wanders my Jean.

Tho' rich is the breeze in their gay, sunny valleys,
  And cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave:
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
  What are they?—The haunt of the tyrant and slave!

* "The heroine of this song was Mrs. Burns, who so charmed the Poet by singing it with taste and feeling, that he declared it to be one of his luckiest lyrics."—CUNNINGHAM.

The slave's spicy forests, and gold-bubbling fountains,
The brave Caledonian views wi' disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds o' his mountains,
Save love's willing fetters, the chains o' his Jean.
He wanders as free, &c.

'TWAS NA HER BONNIE BLUE E'E.

Slow.
Tune—"Laddie, lie near me."
'Twas na her bonnie blue e'e was my ru - in; Fair though she be,
that was ne'er my un - do - ing: 'Twas the dear smile when nae - bo - dy
did mind us, 'Twas the be - witching, sweet stown glance o' kind - ness.

Sair do I fear that to hope is denied me,
Sair do I fear that despair maun abide me!
But tho' fell fortune should fate us to sever,
Queen shall she be in my bosom for ever.

Mary, I 'm thine wi' a passion sincerest,*
And thou hast plighted me love o' the dearest!
And thou 'rt the angel that never can alter,
Sooner the sun in his motion would falter.

Let me hear from you.

No. LXXV.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

You must not think, my good Sir, that I have any intention to enhance the value of my gift, when I say, in justice to the ingenious and worthy artist, that the design and execution of the "Cottar's Saturday Night" is in my opinion one of the happiest productions of Allan's pencil. I shall be grievously disappointed if you are not quite pleased with it.

The figure intended for your portrait, I think strikingly like you, as far as I can remember your phiz. This should make the piece interesting to your family every way. Tell me whether Mrs. Burns finds you out among the figures.

I cannot express the feeling of admiration with which I have read your pathetic "Address to the Wood-lark," your elegant "Panegyric on Caledonia," and your affecting verses on "Chloris' illness." Every repeated perusal of these gives new delight. The other song to "Laddie, lie near me," though not equal to these, is very pleasing.

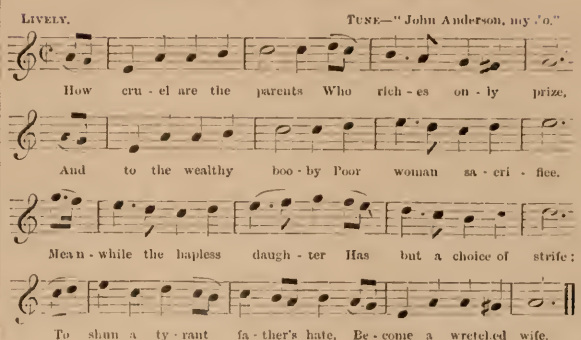
* MS. variation:—
"Jeanie, I 'm thine wi' a passion sincerest."

No. LXXVI.

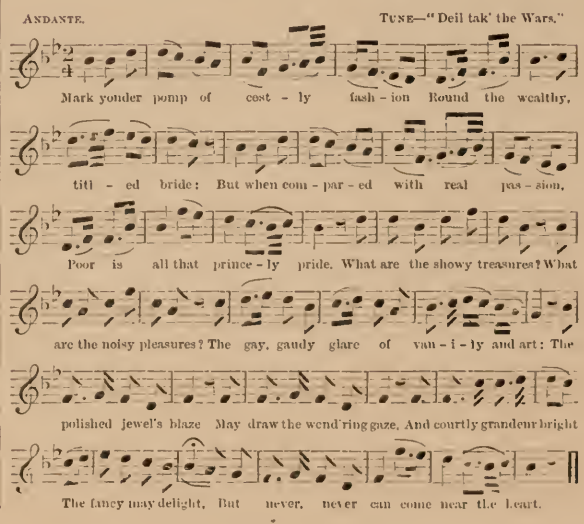
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

HOW CRUEL ARE THE PARENTS.

ALTERED FROM AN OLD ENGLISH SONG.


Lively.
Tune—"John Anderson, my jo."
How cru - el are the parents Who rich - es on - ly prize,
And to the wealthy boo - by Poor woman sa - cri - fice.
Mean - while the hapless daugh - ter Has but a choice of strife;
To shun a ty - rant fa - ther's hate, Be - come a wretched wife.

The ravening hawk pursuing,
The trembling dove thus flies,
To shun impelling ruin,
A while her pinions tries;
Till of escape despairing,
No shelter or retreat,
She trusts the ruthless falconer,
And drops beneath his feet!

MARK YONDER POMP.

Andante.
Tune—"Deil tak' the Wars."
Mark yonder pomp of cost - ly fash - ion Round the wealthy,
titl - ed bride: But when com - par - ed with real pas - sion,
Poor is all that prince - ly pride. What are the showy treasures? What
are the noisy pleasures? The gay, gaudy glare of van - i - ty and art: The
polished jewel's blaze May draw the wond'ring gaze, And courtly grandeur bright
The fancy may delight, But never, never can come near the heart.

But did you see my dearest Chloris
In simplicity's array;
Lovely as yonder sweet opening flower is,
Shrinking from the gaze of day?
O then, the heart alarming,
And all resistless charming,
In Love's delightful fetters she chains the willing soul!
Ambition would disown
The world's imperial crown,
Even Avarice would deny
His worshipp'd deity,
And feel thro' ev'ry vein Love's raptures roll.

Well! this is not amiss. You see how I answer your orders: your tailor could not be more punctual. I am just now in a high fit for poetizing, provided that the strait jacket of criticism don't cure me. If you can in a post or two administer a little of the intoxicating potion of your applause, it will raise your humble servant's frenzy to any height you want. I am at this moment "holding high converse" with the Muses, and have not a word to throw away on such a prosaic dog as you are.

No. LXXVII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

May, 1795.

Ten thousand thanks for your elegant present: though I am ashamed of the value of it being bestowed on a man who has not by any means merited such an instance of kindness. I have shown it to two or three judges of the first abilities here, and they all agree with me in classing it as a first-rate production. My phiz is sae kenspeckle, that the very joiner's apprentice whom Mrs. Burns employed to break up the parcel (I was out of town that day) knew it at once. My most grateful compliments to Allan, who has honoured my rustic muse so much with his masterly pencil. One strange coincidence is, that the little one who is making the felonious attempt on the cat's tail, is the most striking likeness of an ill-deedie, d—n'd, wee, rumblegairie urchin of mine, whom, from that propensity to witty wickedness and manfu' mischief which, even at twa days auld, I foresaw would form the striking features of his disposition, I named Willie Nicol, after a certain friend of mine, who is one of the masters of a grammar-school in a city which shall be nameless.*

* "The picture alluded to was painted from the 'Cottar's Saturday Night:' it displays at once the talent and want of taste of the ingenious artist. The scene is a solemn one: but the serenity of the moment is disturbed by what some esteem as a beauty, namely, the attempt to cut the top of the cat's tail by the little merry urchin seated on the floor. The unity of the sentiment is destroyed; it jars with the harmony of the rest of the picture as much as a snail does in crawling in the bosom of a new opened rose. This sense of propriety is required in such compositions: Burns was a great master in it: he introduced true love, domestic gladness, and love of country along with devotion in his noble poem of 'The Cottar's Saturday Night,' but he never dreamed of throwing in any of his ludicrous or humorous touches—all is as much in keeping as in the best conceived picture."—Cunningham.

Give the inclosed epigram to my much-valued friend Cunningham, and tell him that on Wednesday I go to visit a friend of his, to whom his friendly partiality in speaking of me in a manner introduced me—I mean a well-known military and literary character, Colonel Dirom.

You do not tell me how you liked my two last songs. Are they condemned?

No. LXXVIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

13*th May*, 1795.

It gives me great pleasure to find that you are all so well satisfied with Mr. Allan's production. The chance resemblance of your little fellow, whose promising disposition appeared so very early, and suggested whom he should be named after, is curious enough. I am acquainted with that person, who is a prodigy of learning and genius, and a pleasant fellow, though no saint.

You really make me blush when you tell me you have not merited the drawing from me. I do not think I can ever repay you, or sufficiently esteem and respect you, for the liberal and kind manner in which you have entered into the spirit of my undertaking, which could not have been perfected without you. So I beg you would not make a fool of me again by speaking of obligation.

I like your two last songs very much, and am happy to find you are in such a high fit of poetizing. Long may it last! Clarke has made a fine pathetic air to Mallet's superlative ballad of "William and Margaret," and is to give it to me, to be enrolled among the elect.

No. LXXIX.

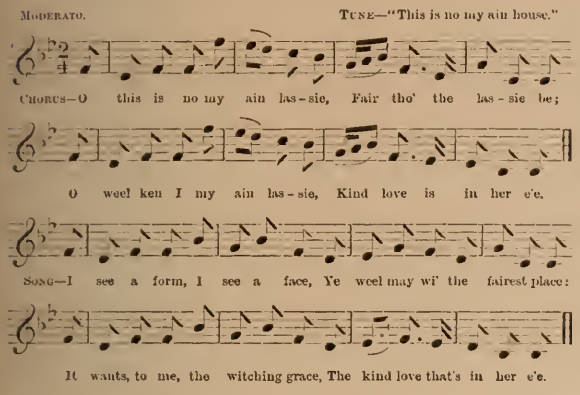
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

In "Whistle and I 'll come to ye, my lad," the iteration of that line is tiresome to my ear. Here goes what I think is an improvement:

O whistle, and I 'll come to ye, my lad;
O whistle, and I 'll come to ye, my lad;
Though father and mother, and a' should gae mad,
Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad.

In fact, a fair dame, at whose shrine I, the Priest of the Nine, offer up the incense of Parnassus—a dame whom the Graces have attired in witchcraft, and whom the Loves have armed with lightning; a fair one, herself the heroine of the song—insists on the amendment; and dispute her commands if you dare!

THIS IS NO MY AIN LASSIE.


Moderato.
Tune—"This is no my ain house."
Chorus—O this is no my ain las-sie, Fair tho' the las-sie be;
O weel ken I my ain las-sie, Kind love is in her e'e.
Song—I see a form, I see a face, Ye weel may wi' the fairest place:
It wants, to me, the witching grace, The kind love that's in her e'e.

She 's bonnie, blooming, straight, and tall,
And lang has had my heart in thrall;
And aye it charms my very saul,
The kind love that 's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

A thief sae pawkie is my Jean,
To steal a blink by a' unseen;
But gleg as light are lovers' een,
When kind love is in the e'e.
O this is no, &c.

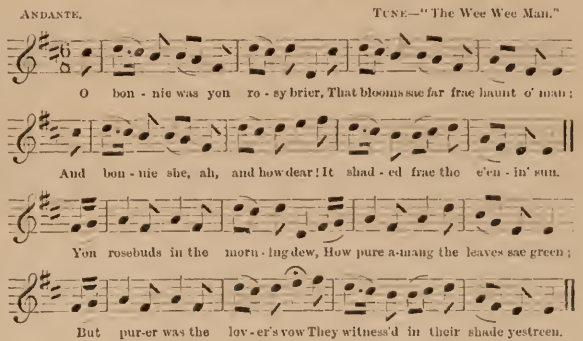
It may escape the courtly sparks,
It may escape the learned clerks;
But weel the watching lover marks
The kind love that 's in her e'e.
O this is no, &c.

Do you know that you have roused the torpidity of Clarke at last? He has requested me to write three or four songs for him, which he is to set to music himself. The inclosed sheet contains two songs for him, which please to present to my valued friend Cunningham.

I inclose the sheet open, both for your inspection, and that you may copy the song, "O bonnie was yon rosy brier." I do not know whether I am right; but that song pleases me, and as it is extremely probable that Clarke's newly roused celestial spark will be soon smothered in the fogs of indolence, if you like the song, it may go as Scottish verses to the air of "I wish my love was in a mire;" and poor Erskine's English lines may follow.

I inclose you a "For a' that, and a' that," which was never in print: it is a much superior song to mine.* I have been told that it was composed by a lady.

O BONNIE WAS YON ROSY BRIER.


Andante.
Tune—"The Wee Wee Man."
O bon-nie was yon ro-sy brier, That blooms sae far frae haunt o' man;
And bon-nie she, ah, and how dear! It shad-ed frae the e'en-in' sun.
Yon rosebuds in the morn-ing dew, How pure a-mang the leaves sae green;
But pur-er was the lov-er's vow They witness'd in their shade yestreen.

All in its rude and prickly bower,
That crimson rose how sweet and fair!
But love is far a sweeter flower,
Amid life's thorny path o' care.
The pathless wild, and wimpling burn,
Wi' Chloris in my arms, be mine;
And I the world nor wish nor scorn,
Its joys and griefs alike resign.

Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the last edition of my poems, presented to the lady, whom, in so many fictitious reveries of passion, but with the most ardent sentiments of real friendship, I have so often sung under the name of Chloris:—

TO CHLORIS.

'Tis friendship's pledge, my young, fair friend,
Nor thou the gift refuse,
Nor with unwilling ear attend
The moralizing muse.

[&c. See the poem at length, vol. i. page 220.]

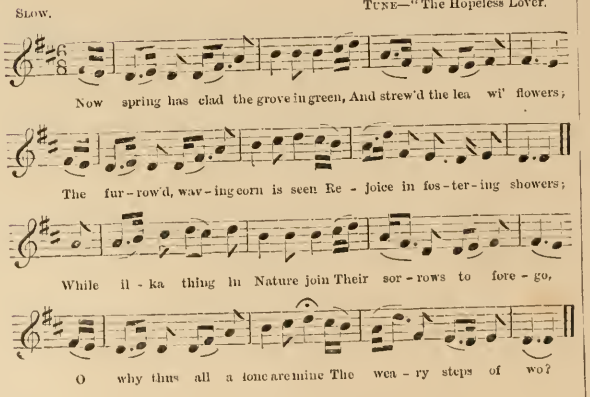
Une bagatelle de l'amitié.—Coila.

* We have no farther account of this piece, except in postscript to Letter LXXX.

TO MR. CUNNINGHAM.

NOW SPRING HAS CLAD THE GROVE IN GREEN.

SLOW. TUNE—"The Hopeless Lover."


Now spring has clad the grove in green, And strew'd the lea wi' flowers;
The fur-row'd, wav-ing corn is seen Re-joice in fos-ter-ing showers;
While il-ka thing in Nature join Their sor-rows to fore-go,
O why thus all a lone are mine The wea-ry steps of wo?

The trout within yon wimpling burn
Glides swift, a silver dart,
And safe beneath the shady thorn
Defies the angler's art;
My life was once that careless stream,
That wanton trout was I;
But love, wi' unrelenting beam,
Has scorch'd my fountains dry.

The little flow'ret's peaceful lot,
In yonder cliff that grows—
Which, save the linnet's flight, I wot,
Nae ruder visit knows—
Was mine; till love has o'er me past,
And blighted a' my bloom,
And now beneath the with'ring blast
My youth and joy consume.

The waken'd lav'rock warbling springs,
And climbs the early sky,
Winnowing blythe her dewy wings
In morning's rosy eye:
As little reckt I sorrow's power,
Until the flowery snare
O' witching love, in luckless hour,
Made me the thrall o' care.

O had my fate been Greenland snows,
Or Afric's burning zone,
Wi' Man and Nature leagu'd my foes,
So Peggy ne'er I 'd known!
The wretch whase doom is, "hope nae mair,"
What tongue his woes can tell!
Within whase bosom, save despair,
Nae kinder spirits dwell.

No. LXXX.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

EDINBURGH, 3*rd August*, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

THIS will be delivered to you by a Dr. Brianton, who has read your works, and pants for the honour of your acquaintance. I do not know the gentleman; but his friend, who applied to me for this introduction, being an excellent young man, I have no doubt he is worthy of all acceptation.

My eyes have just been gladdened, and my mind feasted, with your last packet—full of pleasant things indeed. What an imagination is yours! It is superfluous to tell you that I am delighted with all the three songs, as well as with your elegant and tender verses to Chloris.

I am sorry you should be induced to alter, "O whistle and I'll come to ye, my lad," to the prosaic line, "Thy Jeanie will venture wi' ye, my lad." I must be permitted to say, that I do not think the latter either reads or sings so well as the former. I wish, therefore, you would in my name petition the charming Jeanie, whoever she be, to let the line remain unaltered.

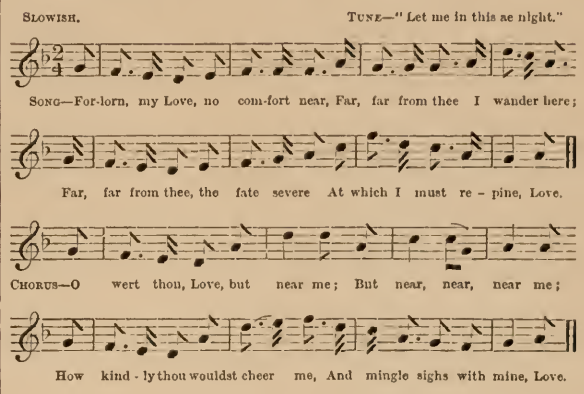
I should be happy to see Mr. Clarke produce a few airs to be joined to your verses. Every body regrets his writing so very little, as every body acknowledges his ability to write well. Pray, was the resolution formed coolly before dinner, or was it a midnight vow made over a bowl of punch with the bard?

I shall not fail to give Mr. Cunningham what you have sent him.

P.S.—The lady's "For a' that and a' that," is sensible enough, but no more to be compared to yours than I to Hercules.

No. LXXXI.

BURNS TO MR THOMSON.

FORLORN, MY LOVE, NO COMFORT NEAR.

SLOWISH.
TUNE—"Let me in this ae night."
SONG—For-lorn, my Love, no com-fort near, Far, far from thee I wander here;
Far, far from thee, the fate severe At which I must re - pine, Love.
CHORUS—O wert thou, Love, but near me; But near, near, near me;
How kind - ly thou wouldst cheer me, And mingle sighs with mine, Love.

Around me scowls a wintry sky,
That blasts each bud of hope and joy;
And shelter, shade, nor home have I,
Save in those arms of thine, Love.
O wert thou, Love, but near me, &c.

Cold, alter'd friendship's cruel part,
To poison fortune's ruthless dart—*
Let me not break thy faithful heart,
And say that fate is mine, Love.
O wert thou, Love, but near me, &c.

But dreary tho' the moments fleet,
O let me think we yet shall meet!
That only ray of solace sweet
Can on thy Chloris shine, Love.
O wert thou, Love, but near me, &c.

How do you like the foregoing? I have written it within this hour; so much for the speed of my Pegasus, but what say you to his bottom?

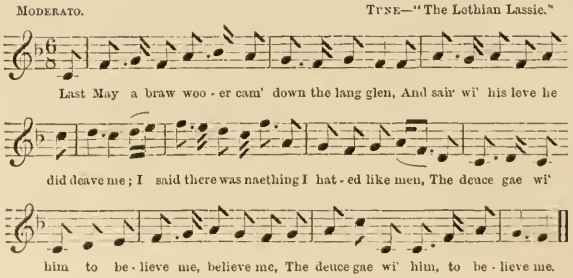
* In a letter dated August 3, 1795, the Poet sent to Thomson the following alterations to obviate some objections he had made to verse third:—

"Cold, alter'd friends, with cruel art,
Poisoning fell Misfortune's dart;
Let me not break thy faithful heart.
And say that fate is mine, Love."

No. LXXXII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

LAST MAY A BRAW WOOER.


Moderato.
Tune—"The Lothian Lassie."
Last May a braw woo - er cam' down the lang glen, And sair wi' his love he
did deave me; I said there was naething I hat - ed like men, The deuce gae wi'
him to be - lieve me, believe me, The deuce gae wi' him, to be - lieve me.

He spak o' the darts in my bonnie black een,
And vow'd for my love he was dying;
I said he might die when he liked, for Jean,
The Lord forgi'e me for lying, for lying,
The Lord forgi'e me for lying!

A weel-stocked mailen—himsel' for the laird—
And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers:
I never loot on that I kenn'd it, or car'd,
But thought I might ha'e waur offers, waur offers,
But thought I might ha'e waur offers.

But what wad ye think? in a fortnight or less—
The deil tak' his taste to gae near her!
He up the lang loan to my black cousin Bess,*
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her, could bear her,
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her.

But a' the niest week as I fretted wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,

* "In the original MS. this line runs,

'He up the *Gateslack* to my black cousin Bess.'

Mr. Thomson objected to this word, as well as to the word *Dalgarnock* in the next verse. Burns replies as follows:—

"Gateslack is the name of a particular place, a kind of passage up among the Lowther hills, on the confines of this county. Dalgarnock is also the name of a romantic spot near the Nith, where are still a ruined church and a burial-ground. However, let the first line run, 'He up the lang loan,'" &c.

"It is always a pity to throw out any thing that gives locality to our Poet's verses."—Currie.

And wha but my fine fickle lover was there!
I glowr'd as I 'd seen a warlock, a warlock,
I glowr'd as I 'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gave him a blink,
Lest neebors might say I was saucy;
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

I spier'd for my cousin fu' couthy and sweet,
Gin she had recover'd her hearin',
And how her new shoon fit her auld shachl't feet,*
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin', a swearin',
But, heavens! how he fell a swearin'!

He begged, for gudesake! I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow:
So e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, to-morrow,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

FRAGMENT.

CHLORIS.

TUNE—"The Caledonian Hunt's Delight." †

WHY, why tell thy lover,
Bliss he never must enjoy?
Why, why undeceive him,
And give all his hopes the lie?
O why, while fancy, raptur'd, slumbers,
Chloris, Chloris, all the theme,
Why, why, wouldst thou, cruel,
Wake thy lover from his dream?

Such is the d—d peculiarity of the rhythm of this air, that I find it impossible to make another stanza to suit it. I am at present quite occupied with the charming sensations of the tooth-ache, so have not a word to spare.

No. LXXXIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

3rd June, 1795.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR English verses to "Let me in this ae night" are tender and beautiful; and your ballad to the "Lothian lassie" is a master-piece for its humour and naïveté. The fragment for the "Caledonian hunt" is quite suited to the original measure of the air, and, as it plagues you so, the fragment must content it. I would rather, as I said before, have had Bacchanalian words, had it so pleased the poet; but nevertheless, for what we have received, Lord, make us thankful!

No. LXXXIV.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

5th February, 1796.

O Robby Burns, are ye sleeping yet?
Or are ye wauken, I would wit?

THE pause you have made, my dear Sir, is awful! ‡ Am I never to hear from you again? I know, and I lament how much you have been afflicted of late, but I trust that returning health and spirits will now enable you to resume the pen, and delight us with your musings. I have still about a dozen Scotch and Irish airs that I wish "married to immortal verse." We have several true-born Irishmen on the Scottish list; but they are now naturalized, and reckoned our own good subjects. Indeed we have none better. I believe I before told you that I have been much urged by some friends to publish a collection of all our favourite airs and songs in octavo, embellished with a number of etchings by our ingenious friend Allan; what is your opinion of this?

* In the original copy of this song, as given in Johnson's "Museum," this line runs thus:—

"And how my auld shoon suited her shauchled feet."

† For music see vol. i. p. 202.

‡ "Burns," says Cunningham, with much good feeling and judgment, "had made a pause in his correspondence from June, 1795, to February, 1796; and Thomson feeling alarm, as much for the Poet's sake as for the 'dozen of Scotch and Irish airs' which he wished 'wedded to immortal verse,' wrote to make inquiries. Something in the tone of the letter, and the circumstance of pressing a sick man to write songs, seem to indicate that Thomson did not imagine that Burns was in a dangerous state. Nor is this surprising: he was wildly gay, or gloomily downcast, by fits and starts. Professor Walker, who had an interview with him in the latter end of the year, failed to perceive in his fierce tone of conversation, and the almost convulsive resolution to abide by the wine, the presence of that two-fold sickness of mind and body which was soon to carry him to the grave. He was, nevertheless, to use the words of a Scottish song,

'Fading in his place;'

and his wearing away was observed by all who took any interest in his fortunes."

No. LXXXV.

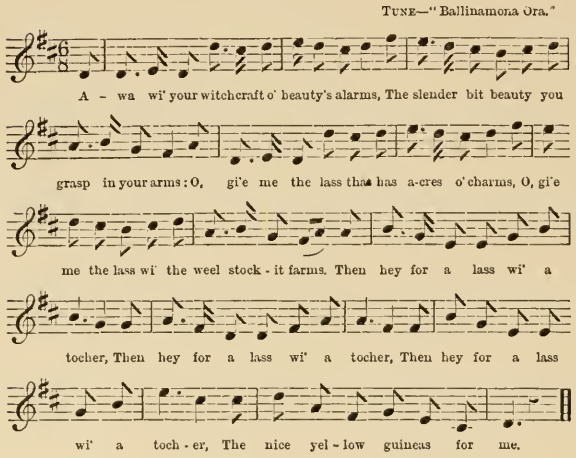
BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

February, 1796.

Many thanks, my dear Sir, for your handsome, elegant present to Mrs. Burns, and for my remaining volume of P. Pindar. Peter is a delightful fellow, and a first favourite of mine. I am much pleased with your idea of publishing a collection of our songs in octavo with etchings. I am extremely willing to lend every assistance in my power. The Irish airs I shall cheerfully undertake the task of finding verses for.

I have already, you know, equipt three with words, and the other day I strung up a kind of rhapsody to another Hibernian melody, which I admire much.

HEY FOR A LASS WI' A TOCHER.


Tune—"Ballinamona Ora."
A - wa wi' your witchcraft o' beauty's alarms, The slender bit beauty you
grasp in your arms: O, gi'e me the lass that has a-cres o' charms, O, gi'e
me the lass wi' the weel stock - it farms. Then hey for a lass wi' a
tocher, Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher, Then hey for a lass
wi' a toch - er, The nice yel - low guineas for me.

Your beauty 's a flower, in the morning that blows,
And withers the faster, the faster it grows;
But the rapturous charm o' the bonnie green knowes,
Ilk spring they 're new deckit wi' bonnie white yowes.
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher, &c.

And e'en when this beauty your bosom has blest,
The brightest o' beauty may cloy when possest;
But the sweet yellow darlings wi' Geordie imprest,
The langer ye ha'e them—the mair they 're caresst.
Then hey for a lass wi' a tocher, &c.

If this will do, you have now four of my Irish engagement. In my by-past songs I dislike one thing, the name Chloris—I meant it as a fictitious name of a certain lady; but, on second thoughts, it is a high incongruity to have a Greek appellation to a Scottish pastoral ballad. Of this and something else in my next: I have more amendments to propose. What you once mentioned of "flaxen locks" is just; they cannot enter into an elegant description of beauty. Of this also again. God bless you!

No. LXXXVI.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

Your "Hey for a lass wi' a tocher" is a most excellent song, and with you the subject is something new indeed. It is the first time that I have seen you debasing the god of soft desire into an amateur of acres and guineas.

I am happy to find you approve of my proposed octavo edition. Allan has designed and etched about twenty plates, and I am to have my choice of them for that work. Independently of the Hogarthian humour with which they abound, they exhibit the character and costume of the Scottish peasantry with inimitable felicity. In this respect, he himself says, they will far exceed the aquatinta plates he did for the Gentle Shepherd, because in the etching he sees clearly what he is doing, but not so with the aquatinta, which he could not manage to his mind.

The Dutch boors of Ostade are scarcely more characteristic and natural than the Scottish figures in those etchings.

No. LXXXVII.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

April, 1796.

Alas, my dear Thomson, I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again! "By Babel streams I have sat and wept," almost ever since I wrote you last; I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain! Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say, with poor Fergusson—

> "Say wherefore has an all-indulgent Heaven
> Light to the comfortless and wretched given?"

This will be delivered to you by a Mrs. Hyslop, landlady of the Globe Tavern here, which for these many

years has been my howff, and where our friend Clarke and I have had many a merry squeeze. I am highly delighted with Mr. Allan's etchings. "Woo'd and married an' a" is admirable. The grouping is beyond all praise. The expression of the figures, conformable to the story in the ballad, is absolutely faultless perfection. I next admire "Turnimspike." What I like least is "Jenny said to Jocky." Besides the female being in her appearance . . . . if you take her stooping into the account, she is at least two inches taller than her lover. Poor Cleghorn! I sincerely sympathize with him! Happy am I to think that he yet has a well-grounded hope of health and enjoyment in this world. As for me—but that is a damn'd subject!

No. LXXXVIII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

4th May, 1796.

I NEED not tell you, my good Sir, what concern the receipt of your last gave me, and how much I sympathize in your sufferings. But do not, I beseech you, give yourself up to despondency, nor speak the language of despair. The vigour of your constitution, I trust, will soon set you on your feet again; and then it is to be hoped you will see the wisdom and the necessity of taking due care of a life so valuable to your family, to your friends, and to the world.

Trusting that your next will bring agreeable accounts of your convalescence and returning good spirits, I remain, with sincere regard, yours.

P. S.—Mrs. Hyslop, I doubt not, delivered the gold seal to you in good condition.*

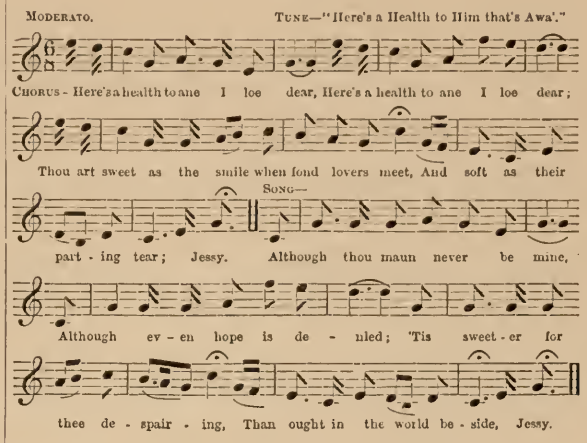
No. LXXXIX.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

MY DEAR SIR,

I ONCE mentioned to you an air which I have long admired—"Here 's a health to them that 's awa, hinny," but I forget if you took any notice of it. I have just been trying to suit it with verses; and I beg leave to recommend the air to your attention once more. I have only begun it.

JESSY.†


MODERATO.
TUNE—"Here's a Health to Him that's Awa'."
CHORUS - Here's a health to ane I loe dear, Here's a health to ane I loe dear;
Thou art sweet as the smile when fond lovers meet, And soft as their
SONG—
part - ing tear; Jessy. Although thou maun never be mine,
Although ev - en hope is de - nied; 'Tis sweet - er for
thee de - spair - ing, Than ought in the world be - side, Jessy.

I mourn thro' the gay, gaudy day,
As, hopeless, I muse on thy charms;
But welcome the dream o' sweet slumber,
For then I am lockt in thy arms, Jessy!
Here 's a health to ane I lo'e dear, &c.

I guess by the dear angel smile,
I guess by the love-rolling e'e;
But why urge the tender confession
'Gainst fortune's fell, cruel decree, Jessy?
Here 's a health to ane I lo'e dear, &c.‡

No. XC.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

THIS will be delivered by a Mr. Lewars,§ a young fellow of uncommon merit. As he will be a day or two in town, you will have leisure, if you choose, to write me by him: and if you have a spare half hour to spend with him, I shall place your kindness to my account. I have no copies

* On this gold seal the Poet caused his coat of arms to be engraven:—*viz.*, a small bush; a bird singing; the legend "woodnotes wild," with the motto "better ha'e a wee bush than nae bield."

† Miss Jessy Lewars, afterwards Mrs. James Thomson, Dumfries.

‡ "In the letter to Mr. Thomson, the three first stanzas only are given, and Mr. Thomson supposed our poet had never gone farther. Among his MSS. was, however, found the fourth stanza, which completes this exquisite song, the last finished offspring of his muse."—CURRIE.

§ Mr. Lewars was brother to Jessy, the subject of the above song.

of the songs I have sent you, and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for either the originals or copies.* I had rather be the author of five well-written songs, than of ten otherwise. I have great hopes that the genial influence of the approaching summer will set me to rights, but as yet I cannot boast of returning health. I have now reason to believe that my complaint is a flying gout: a sad business!

Do let me know how Cleghorn is, and remember me to him.

This should have been delivered to you a month ago. I am still very poorly, but should like much to hear from you.

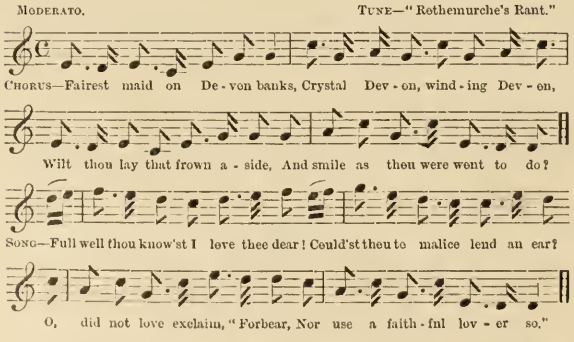
No. XCI.

BURNS TO MR. THOMSON.

BROW, ON THE SOLWAY-FRITH,†
12*th July*, 1796.

AFTER all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel bitch of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness, but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this gratuitously; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen. I tried my hand on "Rothemurche" this morning. The measure is so difficult that it is impossible to infuse much genius into the lines; they are on the other side. Forgive, forgive me!

FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS. ‡

MODERATO. TUNE—"Rothemurche's Rant."

CHORUS—Fairest maid on De - von banks, Crystal Dev - on, wind - ing Dev - on,
Wilt thou lay that frown a - side, And smile as thou were wont to do?
SONG—Full well thou know'st I love thee dear! Could'st thou to malice lend an ear?
O, did not love exclaim, "Forbear, Nor use a faith - ful lov - er so."

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,
Those wanton smiles, O let me share;
And, by thy beauteous self I swear,
No love but thine my heart shall know.
Fairest maid on Devon banks, &c. §

* "It is needless to say that this revisal Burns did not live to perform."—CURRIE.

† See LIFE ‡ Charlotte Hamilton. See LIFE.

No. XCII.

MR. THOMSON TO BURNS.

14*th July*, 1796.

MY DEAR SIR,

EVER since I received your melancholy letter by Mrs. Hyslop, I have been ruminating in what manner I could endeavour to alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily therefore for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure inclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake!

Pray, my good Sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you in the present state of your health, some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of Editor. In the mean time, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour: remember Pope published the Iliad by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you to impute any thing I say to an unworthy motive. Yours faithfully.

The verses to "Rothemurche" will answer finely. I am happy to see you can still tune your lyre.

§ "These verses, and the letter inclosing them, are written in a character that marks the very feeble state of Burns' bodily strength. Mr. Syme is of opinion that he could not have been in any danger of a jail at Dumfries, where certainly he had many firm friends, nor under any such necessity of imploring aid from Edinburgh. But about this time his reason began to be at times unsettled, and the horrors of a jail perpetually haunted his imagination. He died on the 21st of this month."—CURRIE.

Allan Cunningham, on the contrary, asserts that, not only was Burns really in poverty, but, in the opening of 1796, his family were all but wanting bread. "Those who say he had good friends around him, seem not to know that he had a soul too proud to solicit help, and to forget that there are hearts in the world ready to burst before they beg."

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.

No. I.

TO ELLISON, OR ALISON BEGBIE.*

LOCHLEA, 1780.

I VERILY believe, my dear E., that the pure genuine feelings of love are as rare in the world as the pure genuine principles of virtue and piety. This, I hope, will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon I mean their being written in such a serious manner, which, to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for some zealous bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my dear; for though, except your company, there is nothing on earth gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought, that if a well-grounded affection be not really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to it. Whenever the thought of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity, kindles in my breast. It extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathize with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my dear, I often look up to the Divine Disposer of events with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope he intends to bestow on me in bestowing you. I sincerely wish that he may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my dear, is a passion, at least in my view, worthy of a man, and I will add worthy of a Christian. The sordid earth-worm may profess love to a woman's person, whilst in reality his affection is centered in her pocket; and the slavish drudge may go a-wooing as he goes to the horse-market, to choose one who is stout and firm, and, as we may say of an old horse, one who will be a good drudge and draw kindly. I disdain their dirty, puny ideas. I would be heartily out of humour with myself, if I thought I were capable of having so poor a notion of the sex which were designed to crown the pleasures of society. Poor devils! I don't envy them their happiness who have such notions. For my part, I propose quite other pleasures with my dear partner.—R. B. .

* See LIFE.

No. II.

TO THE SAME.

LOCHLEA, 1780.

MY DEAR E.,

I DO not remember, in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love amongst people of our station of life: I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance of the females, and customary for him to keep their company when occasion serves. Some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest; there is something, he knows not what, pleases him, he knows not how, in her company. This I take to be what is called love with the greatest part of us; and I must own, my dear E., it is a hard game such a one as you have to play, when you meet with such a lover. You cannot admit but he is sincere; and yet though you use him ever so favourably, perhaps in a few months, or at farthest a year or two, the same unaccountable fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope, my dear E., you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of virtue and honour; and by consequence, so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my dear, it is love like this alone which can render the married state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please, and a warm fancy, with a flow of youthful spirits, may make them feel something like what they describe; but sure I am the nobler faculties of the mind, with kindred feelings of the heart, can only be the foundation of friendship, and it has always been my opinion that the married life is only friendship in a more exalted degree. If you will be so good as to grant my wishes, and it should please Providence to spare us to the latest periods of life, I can look forward and see that even then, though bent down with wrinkled age—even then, when all other worldly circumstances will be indifferent to me—I will regard my E. with the tenderest affection; and for this plain reason, because she is still possessed of those noble qualities, improved to a much higher degree, which first inspired my affection for her.

> "O happy state, when souls each other draw,
> Where love is liberty, and nature law!"

I know were I to speak in such a style to many a girl, who thinks herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous; but the language of the heart is, my dear E., the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship, but I shall make no apology. I know your good nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss.

R. B.

No. III.

TO THE SAME.

Lochlea, 1781

My Dear E.,

I have often thought it a peculiarly unlucky circumstance in love, that though in every other situation in life telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding, a lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere and his intentions are honourable. I do not think that it is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness which are not felt, and to make vows of constancy and fidelity which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct: but to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth, and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment, and purity of manners—to such a one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, courtship is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be used by any one in so noble, so generous a passion, as virtuous love. No, my dear E., I shall never endeavour to gain your favour by such detestable practices. If you will be so good and so generous as to admit me for your partner, your companion, your bosom friend through life, there is nothing on this side of eternity shall give me greater transport; but I shall never think of purchasing your hand by any arts unworthy of a man, and I will add, of a Christian. There is one thing, my dear, which I earnestly request of you, and it is this; that you would soon either put an end to my hopes by a peremptory refusal, or cure me of my fears by a generous consent.

It would oblige me much if you would send me a line or two when convenient. I shall only add further, that if a behaviour regulated (though perhaps but very imperfectly) by the rules of honour and virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest endeavour to promote your happiness—if these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband, I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover,

R. B.

No. IV.

TO THE SAME.

LOCHLEA, 1781.

I OUGHT, in good manners, to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time; but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write to you on the subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory; "you were very sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me"—what without you I never can obtain—"you wish me all kind of happiness." It would be weak and unmanly to say that without you I never can be happy; but sure I am, that sharing life with you would have given it a relish that, wanting you, I never can taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me. These, possibly, in a few instances may be met with in others; but that amiable goodness, that tender feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with in such a degree in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond anything I have ever met with in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface. My imagination had fondly flattered itself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress; still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you, and as I expect to remove in a few days a little further off, and you, I suppose, will perhaps soon leave this place, I wish to see you or hear from you soon; and if an expression should perhaps escape me, rather too warm for friendship, I hope you will pardon it in, my dear Miss —— (pardon me the dear expression for once).* . . .

R. B.

* Lockhart expresses a favourable opinion of these letters to Alison Begbie. Motherwell remarks that "Burns in these letters moralizes occasionally very happily on love and marriage. They are in fact the only sensible love letters we have seen; yet they have an air of task-work and constraint about them that is far from natural."

Dr. Hately Waddell's opinion of them is thus briefly expressed:—"After such sermonizing, the result was by no means wonderful."

No. V.

TO HIS FATHER.†

IRVINE, *December* 27, 1781.

HONOURED SIR,

I HAVE purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-Year's day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review my past wants, nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I glimmer a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable, employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life: for I asure you I am heartily tired of it, and if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

> "The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come." ‡

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelation, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer. As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it was too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Muir; and with

† See LIFE.

‡ "Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be, blest;
The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
Rests and expatiates in a world to come."—POPE.

wishing you a merry New-Year's day, I shall conclude. I am, honoured Sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNESS.

P. S.—My meal is nearly out, but I am going to borrow till I get more.

No. VI.

TO MR. JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOLMASTER,

STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.*

LOCHLEA, 15*th January*, 1783.

DEAR SIR,

As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor will ever forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, Sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father and a masterly teacher; and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with: but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits, and in this respect, I hope, my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but to tell you the truth, Sir, there is hardly any thing more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be any thing original about him, which shows me human nature in a different light from any thing I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to "study men, their manners, and their ways;" and for this darling subject I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to any thing further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched does not much terrify me: I know that even then my talent for what country folks call "a sensible crack," when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then—I would learn to be happy.† However, I am under no apprehensions about that; for though indolent, yet so far as an extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy, and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist. Not, indeed, for the sake of the money; but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach, and I scorn to fear the face of any man living: above every thing, I abhor as hell the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, who in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his "Elegies;" Thomson; "Man of Feeling"—a book I prize next to the Bible; "Man of the World;" Sterne, especially his "Sentimental Journey;" Macpherson's "Ossian," &c. These are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct, and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to the whole human race—he "who can soar above this little scene of things"—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræ-filial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves! O how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and "catching the manners living as they rise," whilst the men of business jostle me on every side, as an idle incumbrance in their way. But I dare say I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs. Murdoch, not my compliments—for that is a mere common-place story—but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare; and accept of the same for yourself from,

Dear Sir, yours.—R. B.

* Mr. John Murdoch (see LIFE) was the Poet's early teacher. He died in London, where he had been long resident, in 1824.

† "The last shift alluded to here must be the condition of an itinerant beggar"—CURRIE.

"The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg."

See Stanza III. "Epistle to Davie."

No. VII.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.‡

DEAR SIR, LOCHLEA, 21*st June*, 1783.

My father received your favour of the 10th current, and as he has been for some months very poorly in health,

‡ See LIFE.

and is in his own opinion (and, indeed, in almost every body's else) in a dying condition, he has only, with great difficulty, wrote a few farewell lines to each of his brothers-in-law. For this melancholy reason I now hold the pen for him to thank you for your kind letter, and to assure you, Sir, that it shall not be my fault if my father's correspondence in the north die with him. My brother writes to John Caird,* and to him I must refer you for the news of our family.

I shall only trouble you with a few particulars relative to the present wretched state of this country. Our markets are exceedingly high; oatmeal, 17*d.* and 18*d.* per peck, and not to be got even at that price. We have indeed been pretty well supplied with quantities of white pease from England and elsewhere; but that resource is likely to fail us, and what will become of us then, particularly the very poorest sort, Heaven only knows. This country, till of late, was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of silk, lawn, and carpet-weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from English, and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds of the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what in the event we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed in new ones. In short, my dear Sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its as unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast. Even in higher life, a couple of our Ayrshire noblemen and the major part of our knights and squires are all insolvent. A miserable job of a Douglas, Heron, and Co.'s bank, which no doubt you have heard of, has undone numbers of them; and imitating English and French, and other foreign luxuries and fopperies, has ruined as many more. There is a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance: but Fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favours, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them.

My mother sends you a small present of a cheese; 'tis but a very little one, as our last year's stock is sold off; but if you could fix on any correspondent in Edinburgh or Glasgow, we would send you a proper one in the season. Mrs. Black promises to take the cheese under her care so far, and then to send it to you by the Stirling carrier.

I shall conclude this long letter with assuring you that I shall be very happy to hear from you, or any of our friends in your country, when opportunity serves.

My father sends you, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for your welfare and happiness; and mother and the rest of the family desire to inclose their kind compliments to you, Mrs. Burness, and the rest of your family, along with,

Dear Sir,

Your Affectionate Cousin—R. B.

* The husband of a sister of the Poet's father.

No. VIII.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

Lochlea, 17*th February*, 1784.†

Dear Cousin,

I would have returned you my thanks for your kind favour of the 13th of December sooner, had it not been that I waited to give you an account of that melancholy event, which for some time past we have from day to day expected.

On the 13th current I lost the best of fathers. Though, to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke, still the feelings of nature claim their part; and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and the ablest of instructors, without feeling what perhaps the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn.

I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure, with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied by the ties of blood and friendship to a man whose memory I shall ever honour and revere.

I expect, therefore, my dear Sir, you will not neglect any opportunity of letting me hear from you, which will very much oblige,

My dear Cousin, yours sincerely,

R. B.

† The family did not leave Lochlea for Mossgiel till March, 1784.

No. IX.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

Mossgiel, *August* 3, 1784.

My Dear Sir,

I ought in gratitude to have acknowledged the receipt of your last kind letter before this time; but, without troubling you with any apology, I shall proceed to inform you that our family are all in good health at present, and we were very happy with the unexpected favour of John Caird's company for nearly two weeks, and I must say it of him that he is one of the most agreeable, facetious, warm-hearted lads I was ever acquainted with.

We have been surprised with one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the moral world which, I dare say, has happened in the course of this last century. We have had a party of the Presbytery Relief, as they call themselves, for some time in this country. A pretty thriving society of them has been in the burgh of Irvine for some years past, till about two years ago a Mrs. Buchan from Glasgow came and began to spread some fanatical notions of religion among them, and in a short time made many converts among them; and among others their preacher, one Mr. Whyte, who upon that account has been suspended and formally deposed by his brethren.* He continued, however, to preach in private to his party, and was supported, both he and their spiritual mother, as they affect to call old Buchan, by the contributions of the rest, several of whom were in good circumstances, till in spring last the populace rose and mobbed the old leader, Buchan, and put her out of the town; on which all her followers voluntarily quitted the place likewise, and with such precipitation that many of them never shut their doors behind them. One left a washing on the green, another a cow bellowing at the crib without meat, or any body to mind her, and after several stages, they are fixed at present in the neighbourhood of Dumfries. Their tenets are a strange jumble of enthusiastic jargon; among others, she pretends to give them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them, which she does with postures and practices that are scandalously indecent. They have likewise disposed of all their effects, and hold a community of goods, and live nearly an idle life, carrying on a great farce of pretended devotion in barns and woods, where they lodge and lie all together, and hold likewise a community of women, as it is another of their tenets that they can commit no moral sin. I am personally acquainted with most of them, and I can assure you the above mentioned are facts.

This, my dear Sir, is one of the many instances of the folly of leaving the guidance of sound reason and common sense in matters of religion. Whenever we neglect or despise these sacred monitors, the whimsical notions of a perturbated brain are taken for the immediate influences of the Deity, and the wildest fanaticism, and the most inconsistent absurdities, will meet with abettors and converts. Nay, I have often thought that the more out-of-the-way and ridiculous their fancies are, if once they are sanctified under the sacred name of religion, the unhappy mistaken votaries are the more firmly glued to them.

I expect to hear from you soon, and I beg you will remember me to all friends, and believe me to be, my dear Sir, your affectionate Cousin,

Robert Burness.

Direct to me at Mossgiel, parish of Mauchline, near Kilmarnock.

No. X.

TO MR. THOMAS ORR, PARK, NEAR KIRKOSWALD.

Mossgavil, 11*th November*, 1784.

Dear Thomas,

I am much obliged to you for your last letter, tho' I assure you the contents of it gave me no manner of concern. I am presently so cursedly taken in with an affair of gallantry, that I am very glad Peggy is off my hand, as I am at present embarrassed enough without her. I don't choose to enter into particulars in writing, but never was a poor rakish rascal in a more pitiful taking. I should be glad to see you to tell you the affair; meanwhile I am, your friend,

Robert Burness.

No. XI.

TO MR. ROBERT RIDDEL.

My Dear Sir,

On rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a MS. of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been nonsense.

* Accounts of the Buchanites, and of Mrs. Buchan, or "Lucky Buchan," the Joanna Southcott of Scotland: will be found in Chambers' "Lives of Illustrious Scotchmen"—article Buchan: and in M'Phail's *Edinburgh Magazine* for 1847.

I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope, that some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus :—

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c., by Robert Burness; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it, but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature rational or irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature to see how a ploughman thinks and feels under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, in all the species.

"There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print."—Shenstone.

"Pleasing when youth is long expir'd to trace,
The forms our pencil, or our pen design'd!
Such was our youthful air and shape and face!
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."—Ibid.

April, 1783.—Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young unexperienced mind into; still I think it, in a great measure, deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

August.—There is certainly some connection between love, and music, and poetry; and therefore I have always thought it a fine touch of Nature, that passage in a modern love composition—

"As towards her cot he jogged along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly: but I am always pleased with it, as it recals to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then —but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end—

"O once I lov'd a bonnie lass," &c. *

Lest my works should be thought below criticism; or meet with a critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favourable an eye, I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the sex—the agreeables; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy lass. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mostly an expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea—a sweet sonsy lass: the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza, but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurts the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it, but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance.

September.—I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher Mr. Smith in his excellent Theory of Moral Sentiments, that remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well, under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies or crimes have made us miserable and wretched, to bear it up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct, is a glorious effort of self-command.

"Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace," &c.†

March, 1784.—A penitential thought, in the hour of remorse, intended for a tragedy.

"All devil as I am, a damned wretch," &c.‡

I have often observed, in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him, though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining them

* See vol. i. p. 1. † See vol. i. p. 19. ‡ See vol. i. p. 4.

to this or that virtue; on this, likewise, depend a great many, no man can say how many of our vices; for this reason no man can say in what degree any person besides himself can be, with strict justice, called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many of his virtues are owing to constitution and education; how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but from want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped because he was out of the line of such temptation; and what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest, how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all; I say any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

March, 1784.—I have often coveted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of blackguards, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character—those who by thoughtless prodigality, or headstrong passions have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes "Stain'd with guilt, and crimson'd o'er with crimes," I have yet found among them, not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty in the highest perfection.

March, 1784.—There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened, and indeed effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy. In this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following—

"O Thou Great Being! what Thou art," &c. *

April.—As I am what the men of the world, if they knew of such a man, would call a whimsical mortal, I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the—

> "Mighty tempest and the hoary waste,
> Abrupt and deep, stretched o'er the buried earth,"

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving o'er the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of Scripture, "Walks on the wings of the wind." In one of these seasons, just after a tract of misfortunes, I composed the following:—

"The wintry west extends his blast," &c. †

April.—The following song is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification; but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over:—

"My father was a farmer," &c. ‡

April.—Shenstone observes finely that love-verses writ without any real passion are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of love composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill in distinguishing foppery and conceit from real passion and nature. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is my own; only I can say it was, at the time, real:—

"Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows," &c. §

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided in two grand classes, which I shall call the grave and the merry; though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. There are indeed some exceptions; some part of the species who, according to my ideas of these divisions, come under neither of them; such are those individuals whom Nature turns off her hand, oftentimes, very like blockheads, but generally, on a nearer inspection, have somethings surprisingly clever about them. They are more properly men of conceit than men of genius; men whose heads are filled, and whose faculties are engrossed by some whimsical notions in some art or science; so that they cannot think, nor speak with pleasure, on any other subject. Besides this pedantic species, Nature has always produced some mere insipid blockheads, who may be said to live a vegetable life in this world.

The grave I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money; and those whose

* See vol. i. p. 9.

† See vol. i. p. 8. ‡ See vol. i. p. 12. § See vol. i. p. 16.

darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The merry are the men of pleasure of all denominations; the jovial lads, who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action, but without much deliberation follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent, and in particular he who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life, generally indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, the men whose heads are capable of all the towering of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with the delicacy of feeling.

August.—The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men; but as I cannot please myself in the arrangement of my ideas on the subject, I must wait till farther experience and nicer observations throw more light on the subject. In the mean time I shall set down the following fragment which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the classes I belong to:—

"There 's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O," &c.*

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that BEING to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that renders life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow creatures; that so, by forming piety and virtue into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave, I do not see that the turn of mind, and pursuits of such a one as the above verses describe—one who spends the hours and thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare with Ossian, Shakespeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne, &c.; or as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a song to make or mend; and at all times some hearts-dear bonny lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such a one are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the even lawful, bustling, and straining after the world's riches and honours: and I do not see but he may gain heaven as well, which, by the bye, is no mean consideration, who steals thro' the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way: as he, who straining straight forward, perhaps spattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see and be seen a little more conspicuously than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor, indolent devil he has left behind him.

August.—A prayer, when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threaten me, first put Nature on the alarm—

"O Thou unknown, Almighty cause
Of all my hope and fear!" &c.*

August.—Misgivings in the hour of despondency and prospect of death—

"Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene," &c.†

September.—

"O Tibbie, I hae seen the day," &c.‡

"My girl she 's airy, she 's buxom and gay," &c.§

June, 1785.—John Barleycorn—A song to its own Tune.—I once heard the old song that goes by this name sung, and being very fond of it, and remembering only two or three verses of it, viz., the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, with some scraps which I have interwoven here and there in the following piece:—

"There was three kings into the east," &c.‖

June.—The death and dyin' words o' poor Mailie—my ain pet ewe—an unco mournfu' tale—

"As Mailie and her lambs thegither," &c.¶

June.—A letter sent to John Lapraik, near Muirkirk, a true, genuine, Scottish bard (April 1, 1785)—

"While briars an' woodbines budding green," &c.**

On receiving an answer to the above I wrote the following (April 21, 1785)—

"While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake,"††

August.—

"When chill November's surly blast," &c.‡‡

August.—However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Ferguson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c., immortalized in such celebrated performances, whilst my dear native country, the ancient Bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil, and particularly religious liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum; a country, the birthplace of many famous philosophers,

* See vol. i. p. 17.

* See vol. i. p. 10. † See vol. i. p. 11. ‡ See vol. i. p. 3.
§ See vol. i. p. 23. ‖ See vol. i. p. 13. ¶ See vol. i. p. 13.
** See vol. i. p. 33. †† See vol. i. p. 34. ‡‡ See vol. i. p. 24.

soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious Wallace, the Saviour of his country; yet we have never had one Scotch poet of any eminence to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the heathy, mountainous source, and winding sweep of Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius and education.

Obscure I am, and obscure I must be, though no young poet nor young soldier's heart ever beat more fondly for fame than mine—

> "And if there is no other scene of being
> Where my insatiate wish may have its fill—
> This something at my heart that heaves for room,
> My best, my dearest part, was made in vain."

A Fragment—

> "When first I came to Stewart Kyle," &c.*

August.—Har'ste.—A Fragment—

> Now breezy win's and slaughtering guns,
> Bring Autumn's pleasant weather,
> And the muir cock springs on whirring wings
> Amang the blooming heather.
> Now waving crops, with yellow tops,
> Delight the weary farmer,
> An' the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
> To muse on †

September.—There is a certain irregularity in the old Scotch songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of "The Mill, Mill, O," to give it a plain prosaic reading, it halts prodigiously out of measure; on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch songs, which begins "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c., it is most exact measure, and yet, let them be both sung before a real critic—one above the biasses of prejudice, but a thorough judge of Nature—how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first. This particularly is the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet very frequently nothing, not even like rhyme or sameness of jingle, at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that, perhaps, it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness in some of these ancient fragments, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heartache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who, very probably, owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love with such fine strokes of Nature, and, O mortifying to a bard's vanity, their very names are "buried 'mongst the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well! the last, the meanest of the Muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor rustic bard unknown, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love; he, too, has felt all the unfitness of a poetic heart for the struggle of a busy, bad world; he has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored. Like you, all his consolation was his Muse—she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf rest lightly on your bones! And may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

September.—The following fragment is done something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scottish piece called "M'Millan's Peggy," and sings to the tune of Galla water.‡ My "Montgomerie's Peggy" was my deity for six or eight months. She had been bred, though as the world says, without any just pretence for it, in a style of life rather elegant—But as Vanburgh says in one of his comedies, "My damn'd star found me out" there too, for though I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or to tell the truth, what would scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, one day, in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but with the greatest friendship and

* See vol. i. p. 23.

† "Jeanie Armour." For variation see vol. i. p. 1.

‡ Mr. Syme says "this explains the love letters to Begbie."

politeness, she offered me every alliance except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a pre-engagement was really true; but it cost some heart-aches to get rid of the affair.

I have even tried to imitate, in this extempore thing, that irregularity in the rhyme which, when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear—

"Altho' my bed were in yon muir," &c.*

September.—Another fragment in imitation of an old Scotch song, well known among the country ingle sides—I cannot tell the name neither of the song nor the tune, but they are in fine unison with one another. By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental, that when one would compose to them, to "south the tune," as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry. I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times.

Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse—

"When clouds in skies do come together
To hide the brightness of the sun,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
When a' thir storms are past and gone.'

Though fickle fortune has deceiv'd me.
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav'd me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.

I 'll act with prudence as lang 's I 'm able;
But if success I must never find,
Then come Misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
I 'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

The above was an extempore under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether. It was just at the close of that dreadful period already mentioned;† and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since a "tempest brewing round me in the grim sky" of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other, perhaps ere long, overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell to pine in solitary, squalid wretchedness. However, as I hope my poor country muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may, even then, learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and south a sang to sooth my misery.

'Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style. I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter; but the following were the verses I composed to suit it:—

"O raging Fortune's withering blast," &c.‡

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air.

October, 1785.—If ever any young man, on the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations; as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear-bought experience. I have literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and by consequence, that great fool, Solomon—"turned my eyes to behold madness and folly." Nay, I have, with all the ardour of a lively, fanciful, and whimsical imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, poetic heart—shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity. . . . .

[*Here the MS. closes abruptly.*]

No. XII.

TO MISS MARGARET KENNEDY.

1785.

MADAM,

PERMIT me to present you with the inclosed song, as a small though grateful tribute for the honour of your acquaintance. I have in these verses attempted some faint sketches of your portrait in the unembellished, simple manner of descriptive truth. Flattery I leave to your lovers, whose exaggerating fancies may make them imagine you are still nearer perfection than you really are.

Poets, Madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of beauty; as, if they are really poets of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of Spring, or the pensive mildness of Autumn, the grandeur of Summer, or the hoary majesty of Winter, the poet feels

* See vol. i. p. 5.

† See the passage under March, 1784.

‡ See vol. i. p. 11.

a charm unknown to the most of his species: even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman (by far the finest part of God's works below), have sensations for the poetic heart that the herd of men are strangers to. On this last account, Madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr. Hamilton's kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure; their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.

That the arrows of misfortune, however they should, as incident to humanity, glance a slight wound, may never reach your heart—that the snares of villainy may never beset you in the road of life—that innocence may hand you by the path of honour to the dwelling of peace—is the sincere wish of him who has the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. XIII.

TO MISS ——.*

My Dear Countrywoman,

I am so impatient to show you that I am once more at peace with you, that I send you the book I mentioned directly, rather than wait the uncertain time of my seeing you. I am afraid I have mislaid or lost Collins' Poems, which I promised to Miss Irvin. If I can find them, I will forward them by you: if not, you must apologize for me.

I know you will laugh at it when I tell you that your piano and you together have played the deuce somehow about my heart. My breast has been widowed these many months, and I thought myself proof against the fascinating witchcraft; but I am afraid you will "feelingly convince me what I am." I say, I am afraid, because I am not sure what is the matter with me. I have one miserable bad symptom; when you whisper, or look kindly to another, it gives me a draught of damnation. I have a kind of wayward wish to be ten minutes by yourself, though what I would say, Heaven above knows, for I am sure I know not. I have no formed design in all this; but just, in the nakedness of my heart, write you down a mere matter-of-fact story. You may perhaps give yourself airs of distance on this, and that will completely cure me; but I wish you would not: just let us meet, if you please, in the old beaten way of friendship.

I will not subscribe myself your humble servant, for that is a phrase, I think, at least fifty miles off from the heart; but I will conclude with sincerely wishing that the Great Protector of innocence may shield you from the barbed dart of calumny, and hand you by the covert snare of deceit.

R. B.

* Unknown. See Life.

No. XIV.

TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.†

Mossgiel, *February* 17, 1786.

My Dear Sir,

I have not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have inclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the Muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, "The Ordination," a poem on Mr. M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; "Scotch Drink," a poem; "The Cottar's Saturday Night;" "An Address to the De'il," &c. I have likewise completed my poem on the "Dogs," but have not shown it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr. Aiken in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel, ‡ and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline; they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable—news I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith; § he is the only friend I have now in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a friend, I am sure neither good nor bad fortune should estrange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday. I am, my dear Sir, yours,

Robert Burness.

No. XV.

TO JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.

. . . Against two things I am fixed as fate—staying at home; and owning her conjugally. The first, by

† Originally a clerk with Gavin Hamilton. See Life.

‡ The Mauchline carrier.

§ James Smith, shopkeeper in Mauchline, to whom the Poet addresses one of his poetical epistles, "Dear Smith," &c. See vol. i. p. 69.

Heaven, I will not do! the last, by Hell, I will never do! A good God bless you, and make you happy, up to the warmest weeping wish of parting friendship. . . .

If you see Jean, tell her I will meet her, so help me God in my hour of need.

R. B.

No. XVI.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.*

Mossgiel, *3rd March*, 1786.

Sir,

I have done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my Cottager. If you have a leisure minute, I should be glad you would copy it and return me either the original or the transcript, as I have not a copy of it by me, and I have a friend who wishes to see it,

"Now Kennedy, if foot or horse," &c. †

Robert Burness.

No. XVII.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR,‡ KILMARNOCK.

Mossgiel, 20*th March*, 1786.

Dear Sir,

I am heartily sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as you returned through Mauchline; but as I was engaged, I could not be in town before the evening.

I here enclose you my "Scotch Drink," and "may the —— follow with a blessing for your edification." I hope, some time before we hear the gowk, to have the pleasure of seeing you in Kilmarnock, when I intend to have a gill between us, in a mutchkin-stoup, which will be a great comfort and consolation to,

Dear Sir, your humble servant,

Robert Burness.

* Kennedy, factor to the Earl of Dumfries, afterwards to Lord Breadalbane.

† See vol. i. p. 79.

‡ A great early friend of Burns, and an active promoter both of the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions of his poems; of the latter he took forty copies.

No. XVIII.

TO MR. AIKEN.*

Mossgiel, *3rd April*, 1786.

Dear Sir,

I received your kind letter with double pleasure, on account of the second flattering instance of Mrs. C.'s notice and approbation. I assure you I

"Turn out the brunt side o' my shin,"

as the famous Ramsay, of jingling memory, says of such a patroness. Present her my most grateful acknowledgments in your very best manner of telling truth. I have inscribed the following stanza on the blank leaf of Miss [Hannah] More's work.

Thou flattering mark of friendship kind, &c. †

My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to the press. I expect to hear from you by the first opportunity.

I am ever, dear Sir, yours,

Robert Burness.‡

No. XIX.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., AYR. §

June, 1786.

Honoured Sir,

My proposals came to hand last night, and knowing that you would wish to have it in your power to do me a service as early as any body, I enclose you half a sheet of them. I must consult you, first opportunity, on the propriety of sending my *quondam* friend, Mr. Aiken, a copy. If he is now reconciled to my character as an honest man, I would do it with all my soul; but I would not be beholden to the noblest being ever God created, if he imagined me to be a rascal. *Apropos*, old Mr. Armour prevailed with him to mutilate that unlucky paper yesterday. Would you believe it? though I had not a hope, nor even a wish to make her mine after her conduct; yet when he told me the names were cut out of the paper, my heart died within me, and he cut my veins with the news. Perdition seize her falsehood!

Robert Burns.

* Aiken, to whom the "Cottar's Saturday Night" is addressed.

† See vol. i. p. 80.

‡ The last letter in which the Poet signed himself *Burness*.

§ Banker in Ayr, once provost, and a most respectable man, to whom the "Brigs o' Ayr" were addressed. He died in 1812.

No. XX.

TO MR. M'WHINNIE, WRITER, AYR.

MOSSGIEL, 17*th April*, 1786.

IT is injuring some hearts, those hearts that elegantly bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend; for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my own feelings in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the enclosed,* because I know it will gratify yours to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need.

Be sure to remember a poor poet militant in your prayers. He looks forward with fear and trembling to that, to him, important moment which stamps the die with—with—with, perhaps, the eternal disgrace of,

My dear Sir, your humble, afflicted, tormented,

ROBERT BURNS.

No. XXI.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.

MOSSGIEL, 20*th April*, 1786.

SIR,

BY some neglect in Mr. Hamilton, I did not hear of your kind request for a subscription paper till this day. I will not attempt any acknowledgment for this, nor the manner in which I see your name in Mr. Hamilton's subscription list. Allow me only to say, Sir, I feel the weight of the debt.

I have here, likewise, enclosed a small piece, the very latest of my productions.† I am a good deal pleased with some sentiments myself, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart which, as the elegantly melting Gray says, "melancholy has marked for her own."

Our race comes on apace—that much expected scene of revelry and mirth; but to me it brings no joy equal to that meeting with you which you last flattered the expectation of,

Sir, your indebted humble servant,

R. B.

* A prospectus of his poems. Mr. M'Whinnie subscribed himself, and got others to do so.

† The "Mountain Daisy," in the original MS. it is called "The Gowan."

No. XXII.

EGOTISMS FROM MY OWN SENSATIONS.

May, ——

I DON'T well know what is the reason of it, but somehow or other, though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved, yet I never could get the art of commanding respect. I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls "that understrapping virtue of discretion." I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*, that I sometimes think the character of a certain great man I have read of somewhere is very much *apropos* to myself, that he was "a compound of great talents and great folly."

N. B.—To try if I can discover the causes of this wretched infirmity, and, if possible, to mend it.

No. XXIII.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY.‡

MOSSGIEL, 17*th May*, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you the above hasty copy as I promised. In about three or four weeks I shall probably set the press agoing. I am much hurried at present, otherwise your diligence so very friendly in my subscription should have a more lengthened acknowledgment from,

Dear Sir, your obliged servant,

R. B.

No. XXIV.

TO MR. DAVID BRICE.§

MOSSGIEL, *June* 12, 1786.

DEAR BRICE,

I RECEIVED your message by G. Paterson, and as I am very throng at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate as your humble servant still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

‡ Enclosing the author's "Epistle to John Rankine." See vol. i. p. 21.

§ He was a shoemaker in Glasgow.

Poor, ill-advised, ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last.* You have heard all the particulars of that affair, and a black affair it is. What she thinks of her conduct now I don't know; one thing I do know—she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her; and to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all, although I won't tell her so if I were to see her, which I don't want to do. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! how happy have I been in thy arms! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely: I foresee she is in the road to, I am afraid, eternal ruin.

May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her; and may His grace be with her and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure; the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then, farewell, dear old Scotland; and farewell, dear ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence poet in print; and to-morrow my works go to the press. I expect it will be a volume of about two hundred pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do, and then turn a wise man as fast as possible.

Believe me to be, dear Brice, your friend and well-wisher,

R. B.

No. XXV.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.

Mossgiel, near Mauchline, *July* 5, 1786.

My Dear Sir,

I wrote you about three half-twelve months ago by post, and I wrote you about a year ago by a private hand, and I have not had the least return from you. I have just half-a-minute to write you by an Aberdeen gentleman of my acquaintance, who promises to wait upon you with this on his arrival, or soon after: I intend to send you a letter accompanied with a singular curiosity in about five or six weeks hence. I shall then write you more at large; meanwhile you are just to look on this as a *memento me*. I hope all friends are well. I am ever, my dear Sir, your affectionate cousin,

Robert Burness.

No. XXVI.

TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

Mossgiel, 9*th July*, 1786.

My Dear Friend,

With the sincerest grief I read your letter. You are truly a son of misfortune. I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you how your health goes on; if it is any way re-establishing, or if Leith promises well: in short, how you feel in the inner man.

No news worth any thing; only godly Bryan was in the inquisition yesterday, and half the countryside as witnesses against him. He still stands out steady and denying: but proof was led yesternight of circumstances highly suspicious, almost *de facto;* one of the girls made oath that she upon a time rashly entered the house, to speak in your cant, "in the hour of cause."

I have waited on Armour since her return home; not from the least view of reconciliation, but merely to ask for her health, and to you I will confess it, from a foolish hankering fondness, very ill placed indeed. The mother forbade me the house, nor did Jean show that penitence that might have been expected. However, the priest, I am informed, will give me a certificate as a single man, if I comply with the rules of the church, which for that very reason I intend to do.

I am going to put on sackcloth and ashes this day. I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat. *Peccavi, pater, miserere mei.* My book will be ready in a fortnight. If you have any subscribers, return them by Connell.* The Lord stand with the righteous; amen, amen.

R. B.

No. XXVII.

TO MR. DAVID BRICE, SHOEMAKER, GLASGOW.

Mossgiel, 17*th July*, 1786.

I have been so throng printing my poems, that I could scarcely find as much time as to write to you. Poor

* She had gone in May, 1786, to reside in Paisley with a relation of her mother's.

* Connell the carrier.

Armour is come back again to Mauchline, and I went to call for her, and her mother forbade me the house, nor did she herself express much sorrow for what she has done. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr. Auld has promised me. I am now fixed to go for the West Indies in October. Jean and her friends insisted much that she should stand along with me in the kirk, but the minister would not allow it, which bred a great trouble I assure you, and I am blamed as the cause of it, though I am sure I am innocent; but I am very much pleased, for all that, not to have had her company. I have no news to tell you that I remember. I am really happy to hear of your welfare, and that you are so well in Glasgow. I must certainly see you before I leave the country. I shall expect to hear from you soon, and am, dear Brice, yours,

R. B.

No. XXVIII.

TO JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

Old Rome Forest, 30*th July*, 1786.

My Dear Richmond,

My hour is now come—you and I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at farthest, to repair aboard the Nancy, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it? Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and like a true son of the gospel, "have nowhere to lay my head." I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake; though, may all the furies that rend the injured, enraged lover's bosom, await her mother until her latest hour! I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more—let me hear from you by the return of coach. I will write you ere I go.

I am, dear Sir, yours here and hereafter,

R. B.

No. XXIX.

TO MR. JOHN KENNEDY, DUMFRIES HOUSE.

Kilmarnock, *August*, 1786.

My Dear Sir,

Your truly facetious epistle of the 3rd inst. gave me much entertainment. I was only sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as I passed your way, but we shall bring up all our leeway on Wednesday, the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you and take a kind, very probably a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica; and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day. I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class. Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my authorship; but now you have them, let them speak for themselves—

Farewell, dear friend! may gude luck hit you,
And 'mang her favourites admit you!
If e'er detraction shore to smit you,
May nane believe him!
And ony deil that thinks to get you,
Good Lord deceive him.

R. B.

No. XXX.

TO JOHN LOGAN, Esq., OF LAIGHT.

Kilmarnock, 10*th August*, 1786.

Sir,

I gratefully thank you for your kind offices in promoting my subscription, and still more for your very friendly letter. The first was doing me a favour, but the last was doing me an honour. I am in such a bustle at present, preparing for my West India voyage—as I expect a letter every day from the master of the vessel, to repair directly to Greenock—that I am under a necessity to return you the subscription bills, and trouble you with the quantum of copies till called for, or otherwise transmitted to the gentlemen who have subscribed. Mr. Bruce Campbell is already supplied with two copies, and I here send you twenty copies more. If any of the gentlemen are supplied from any other quarter, 'tis no matter; the copies can be returned.

If orders from Greenock do not hinder, I intend doing myself the honour of waiting on you, Wednesday the 16th inst.

I am much hurt, Sir, that I must trouble you with the copies; but, circumstanced as I am, I know no other way your friends can be supplied. I have the honour to be, Sir, your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. XXXI.

TO MONS. JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.*

MOSSGIEL, *Monday Morning, 14th August*, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WENT to Dr. Douglas yesterday, fully resolved to take the opportunity of Captain Smith; but I found the Doctor with a Mr. and Mrs. White, both Jamaicans, and they have deranged my plans altogether. They assure him, that to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port Antonio will cost my master, Charles Douglas, upwards of fifty pounds; besides running the risk of throwing myself into a pleuritic fever in consequence of hard travelling in the sun. On these accounts he refuses sending me with Smith; but a vessel sails from Greenock the first of September, right for the place of my destination. The captain of her is an intimate friend of Mr. Gavin Hamilton's, and as good a fellow as heart could wish: with him I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter I know not, but I hope to weather the storm. Perish the drop of blood of mine that fears them! I know their worst, and am prepared to meet it—

"I 'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow."

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as much self-denial as to be out of bed about seven o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them—

"O woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you
To temper man!—we had been brutes without you!"

R. B.

No. XXXII

TO MONS. THOMAS CAMPBELL, PENCLOE.

NEW CUMNOCK, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE met with few men in my life whom I more wished to see again than you, and chance seems industrious to disappoint me of that pleasure. I came here yesterday fully resolved to see you and Mr. Logan at New Cumnock; but a conjuncture of circumstances conspired against me. Having an opportunity of sending you a line, I joyfully embrace it. It is perhaps the last mark of our friendship you can receive from me on this side of the Atlantic.

Farewell! May you be happy up to the wishes of parting friendship!

R. B.

MR. J. MERRY'S, *Saturday Morn.*

No. XXXIII.

TO WILLIAM NIVEN, MERCHANT, MAYBOLE.

CARE OF THOMAS PIPER, SURGEON—TO BE LEFT AT DR. CHARLES' SHOP, AYR.

MOSSGIEL, *30th August*, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE been very throng ever since I saw you, and have not got the whole of my promise performed to you; but you know the old proverb, "The break o' a day 's no the break o' a bargain." Have patience and I will pay you all.

I thank you with the most heartfelt sincerity for the worthy knot of lads you introduced me to. Never did I meet with so many congenial souls together, without one dissonant jar in the concert. To all and each of them make my friendly compliments, particularly "Spunkie youth, Tammie." Remember me in the most respectful manner to the Bailie, and Mrs. Niven, to Mr. Dun, and the two truly worthy old gentlemen I had the honour of being introduced to on Friday; tho' I am afraid the conduct you forced me on may make them see me in a light I would fondly think I do not deserve.

I will perform the next of my promise soon; in the meantime, remember this—never blaze my songs among the million, as I would abhor to hear every prentice mouthing my poor performances in the streets. Every one of my Maybole friends is welcome to a copy if they choose; but I don't wish them to go farther. I mean it as a small token of my respect for them—a respect as sincere as the love of dying saints. I am ever, my dear William, your obliged,

R. B.

* See previous Note, vol. ii. p. 106.

No. XXXIV.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

Mossgiel, *Friday Morning.*

My Friend, and Brother,

Warm recollections of an absent friend presses so hard upon my heart, that I send him the prefixed bagatelle (The Calf), pleased with the thought it will greet the man of my bosom, and be a kind of distant language of friendship.

You will have heard that poor Armour has repaid me double. A very fine boy and a girl have awakened a thought and feelings that thrill, some with tender pressure and some with foreboding anguish, through my soul.

The poem was nearly an extemporaneous production, on a wager with Mr. Hamilton, that I would not produce a poem on the subject in a given time.

If you think it worth while, read it to Charles and Mr. W. Parker, and if they choose a copy of it, it is at their service, as they are men whose friendship I shall be proud to claim, both in this world and in that which is to come.

I believe all hopes of staying at home will be abortive; but more of this when, in the latter part of next week, you shall be troubled with a visit from,

My dear Sir,

Your most devoted,

R. B.

No. XXXV.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.*

Mossgiel, *Tuesday, noon, September* 26, 1786.

My Dear Sir,

I this moment receive yours—receive it with the honest, hospitable warmth of a friend's welcome. Whatever comes from you wakens always up the better blood about my heart, which your kind little recollections of my parental friend carries as far as it will go. 'Tis there that man is blest! 'Tis there, my friend, man feels a consciousness of something within him above the trodden clod! The grateful reverence to the hoary earthly authors of his being—the burning glow when he clasps the woman of his soul to his bosom—the tender yearnings of heart for the little angels to whom he has given existence—these Nature has poured in milky streams about the human heart; and the man who never rouses them to action by the inspiring influences of their proper objects, loses by far the most pleasurable part of his existence.

My departure is uncertain, but I do not think it will be till after harvest. I will be on very short allowance of time indeed, if I do not comply with your friendly invitation. When it will be I don't know; but if I can make my wish good, I will endeavour to drop you a line some time before. My best compliments to Mrs. Burness; I should be equally mortified should I drop in when she is abroad, but of that I suppose there is little chance.

What I have wrote Heaven knows; I have not time to review it: so accept of it in the beaten way of friendship. With the ordinary phrase, and perhaps rather more than the ordinary sincerity—I am, dear Sir, ever yours,

R. B.

No. XXXVI.

TO MRS. STEWART OF STAIR.†

1786.

Madam,

The hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promises so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c., which never made their appearance, except to a friend or two at most. The song, to the tune of "Ettrick Banks," you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think, myself, it has some merit; both as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening; and one of the finest pieces of nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know anything of—an amiable, beautiful young woman: but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure bard, when any of the great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, Madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connections in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers; and more, I am afraid that even the most

* Written when preparing to go to the West Indies.

† On the eve of my intended going to Jamaica. See the song "Flow gently, sweet Afton," vol. i. p. 204.

refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember—the reception I got when I had the honour of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness, but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper and goodness of heart. Surely, did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation, but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs. Stewart of Stair.

R. B.

No. XXXVII.

TO MR. ROBERT AIKEN.*

AYRSHIRE, 1786.

SIR,

I WAS with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of the first and readiest, which he declined. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen; he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition 'till I grow richer! an epoch which, I think, will arrive at the payment of the British national debt.†

There is scarcely anything hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to show my gratitude to Mr. Ballantine, by publishing my poem of "The Brigs o' Ayr." I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable, in a very long life, of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations; but I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection, but sheerly the instinctive emotion of a heart too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the Excise. There are many things plead strongly against it: the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequences of my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides, I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it.

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet I think I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence. If so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O thou unknown Power!—thou Almighty God who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me!

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet I have seen something of the storms of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friend, my benefactor, be successful in your applications‡ for me, perhaps it may not be in my power in that way to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail further misery———.

To tell the truth, I have little reason for this last complaint, as the world in general has been kind to me fully

* "This letter was evidently written under the distress of mind occasioned by our poet's separation from Mrs. Burns"—CURRIE—and between the settlement with Wilson and the proposals for a new edition. See LIFE.

† "John Wilson, printer of the first edition of Burns' Poems, on whom the poet composed the satirical lines—

"Whoe'er thou art, O reader, know,
That death has murder'd Johnnie!
And here his body lies fu' low;
For saul, he ne'er had ony."

—AYRSHIRE CONTEMPORARIES OF BURNS.

‡ So early as this period some of the poet's friends were endeavouring to obtain for him an appointment in the Excise.

up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least never with the force it deserved, that this world is a busy scene, and man a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast), still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be done. When all my schoolfellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the "hallachores" of the human race) were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent, in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was "standing idle in the market-place," or only left the chase of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt from whim to whim.

You see, Sir, that if to know one's errors were a probability of mending them, I stand a fair chance; but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it.

R. B.

No. XXXVIII.

TO JOHN MACKENZIE, Esq., SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.*

Wednesday Morning, 1st November, 1786.

Dear Sir,

I never spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honour of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the professor [Dugald Stewart]. I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object; he does it with such a grace. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus—four parts Socrates—four parts Nathanael—and two parts Shakspeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since.† They may entertain you a little, with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as to favour the performances of,

Dear Sir, your very humble servant,

R. B.

* Dr. Mackenzie was a surgeon in Mauchline and early friend of the Poet's. He was married to one of the Mauchline Belles (see Poems), and afterwards practised for many years at Irvine. In his latter days he retired to Edinburgh, where he died, January 11, 1837.

† The verses were those on Burns' dining with Lord Daer. See Poems.

No. XXXIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.‡

Ayrshire, *July*, 1786.

Madam,

I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honoured with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you are pleased to pay my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus: nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honour him with their approbation. Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the Saviour of his country.

"Great patriot hero! ill-requited chief!"

The first book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was "The Life of Hannibal;" the next was "The History of Sir William Wallace:" for several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out, after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

"Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat."

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen of miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.

R. B.

‡ See Life. Mrs. Dunlop got back all her letters to Burns from Dr. Currie, and perhaps they still exist, but the family have never been willing to print them.

No. XL.

TO MR. ARCHIBALD LAWRIE, NEWMILNS.*

MOSSGIEL, 13*th November*, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE, along with this, sent two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the songs, with the volume of the Scotch poets, as soon as they can conveniently be despatched. If they are left at Mr. Wilson the bookseller's shop in Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Lawrie, and a poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young ladies, particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of Saul.

Indeed, it needs not the feelings of a poet to be interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw; as I think the peaceful unity of St. Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion.

R. B.

No. XLI.

TO MONS. ARCHIBALD LAWRIE,

COLLINE DE ST. MARGARETE.

MAUCHLINE, 15*th November*, 1786.

DEAR SIR,

IF convenient, please return me by Connel, the bearer, the two volumes of songs I left last time I was at St. Margaret's Hill.

My best compliments to all the good family. *A Dieu je vous commende.*

R. B.

No. XLII.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

MOSSGIEL, 18*th November*, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

INCLOSED you have "Tam Samson," as I intend to print him. I am thinking for my Edinburgh expedition on Monday or Tuesday come se'en-night, for pos. I will see you on Tuesday first.

I am ever, your much indebted,

R. B.

No. XLIII.

TO MISS WILHELMINA ALEXANDER.†

MOSSGIEL, 18*th November*, 1786.

MADAM,

POETS are such outré beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the rules of propriety, than the sober sons of judgment and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the enclosed poem, which he begs leave to present to you. Whether it has poetical merit any way worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge: but it is the best my abilities can produce; and what to a good heart will, perhaps, be a superior grace, it is equally sincere as fervent.

The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, Madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *Reveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favourite haunts of my Muse—the banks of the Ayr—to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path, lest I should disturb their little songs or frighten them to another station. Surely, said I to myself, he must be a wretch indeed who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and to rob you of all the property Nature gives you—your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings. Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it preserved from the rudely-browsing cattle or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene, and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect I spied one of the finest pieces of Nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape or blest a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted who hold commerce with aerial beings! Had calumny and villainy taken my walk,

* Archibald Lawrie, son of the Rev. George Lawrie, and married to Miss Adair, sister-in-law to Charlotte Hamilton. See LIFE.

† Enclosing a song inspired by her charms. See LIFE.

they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain dull historic prose to metaphor and measure.

The enclosed song was the work of my return home, and perhaps but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene. I am going to print a second edition of my Poems, but cannot insert these verses without your permission. I have the honour to be, Madam, your most obedient and very humble servant,

R. B.

WELL, Mr. Burns, and *did* the lady give you the desired permission? No! She was too fine a lady to *notice* so plain a compliment. As to her great brothers, whom I have since met in life on more equal terms of respectability, why should I quarrel their want of attention to me? When Fate swore that their purses should be full, Nature was equally positive that their heads should be empty. Men of their fashion were surely incapable of being unpolite? "Ye canna mak a silk-purse o' a sow's lug."

R. B., 1792.

No. XLIV.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., BANKER, AYR.*

MOSSGIEL, 20*th November*, 1786.

SIR,

ENCLOSED you have my first attempt in that irregular kind of measure in which many of our finest odes are wrote. How far I have succeeded I don't know, but I shall be happy to have your opinion on Friday first (24th Nov.), when I intend being in Ayr.

I hear of no returns from Edinburgh to Mr. Aiken respecting my second edition business, so I am thinking to set out beginning of next week for the city myself. If my first poetic patron, Mr. Aiken, is in town, I want to get his advice, both in my procedure and some little criticism affairs much, if business will permit you to honour me with a few minutes when I come down on Friday. I have the honour to be, Sir, your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.

* Enclosing the Poem called "A Winter Night."

No. XLV.

IN THE NAME OF THE NINE, AMEN.

WE, Robert Burns, by virtue of a warrant from Nature, bearing date the twenty-fifth of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine,† Poet Laureat and Bard-in-Chief, in and over the districts and countries of Kyle, Cunningham, and Carrick, of old extent, to our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John M'Adam, students and practitioners in the ancient and mysterious science of confounding right and wrong.

RIGHT TRUSTY:

Be it known unto You, that whereas in the course of our care and watchings over the order and police of all and sundry the manufacturers, retainers, and venders of poesy; bards, poets, poetasters, rhymers, jinglers, songsters, ballad singers, &c., &c., &c., male and female—We have discovered a certain nefarious, abominable, and wicked song or ballad, a copy whereof we have enclosed; Our Will therefore is, that Ye pitch upon and appoint the most execrable individual of that most execrable species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nick-name of "The Deil's Yell Nowte:"‡ and after having caused him to kindle a fire at the Cross of Ayr, Ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch's merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such compositions and composers. And this in nowise leave Ye undone, but have it executed in every point as this Our Mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in person we hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

Given at Mauchline this twentieth day of November, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

GOD SAVE THE BARD!

No. XLVI.

TO MR. GEORGE REID, BARQUHARIE.

EDINBURGH, 29*th November*, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

JOHN SAMSON begged your pownie in such a manner, seconded by Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield,

† The Poet's birth-day.

‡ "Deil's Yell Nowte:" some suppose this means old bachelors, others that it is a slang name for sheriffs' officers, *et hoc omne genus*. The poem enclosed was "Holy Willie's Prayer."

that I hope you will forgive my not returning it by the carrier.

I left Mr. Prentice's on Monday night. There was a most agreeable little party in the evening; a Mr. Lang, a dainty body of a clergyman; Mr. and Mrs. Stodart—a glorious fellow, with a still more glorious wife, with whom I breakfasted, along with Mr. Prentice, next morning. For Mr. Prentice, no words can do him justice. Sound sterling sense, and plain warm hospitality are truly his.

R. B.

No. XLVII.

TO JAMES DALRYMPLE, Esq. OF ORANGEFIELD.

30*th November*, 1786.

Dear Sir,

I suppose the devil is so elated with his success with you, that he is determined by a *coup de main* to complete his purposes on you all at once, in making you a poet. I broke open the letter you sent me: hummed over the rhymes; and as I saw they were extempore, said to myself, they were very well; but when I saw at the bottom a name I shall ever value with grateful respect, "I gapit wide, but naething spak." I was nearly as much struck as the friends of Job, of affliction-bearing memory, when they sat down with him seven days and seven nights, and spake not a word.

I am naturally of a superstitious cast, and as soon as my wonder-scared imagination regained its consciousness, and resumed its functions, I cast about what this mania of yours might portend. My foreboding ideas had the wide stretch of possibility; and several events, great in their magnitude and important in their consequences, occurred to my fancy. The downfall of the conclave, or the crushing of the Cork rumps; a ducal coronet to Lord George Gordon and the Protestant interest; or St. Peter's keys to . . . .

You want to know how I come on. I am just *in statu quo*, or, not to insult a gentleman with my Latin, in "auld use and wont." The noble Earl of Glencairn took me by the hand to-day, and interested himself in my concerns, with a goodness like that benevolent Being whose image he so richly bears. He is a stronger proof of the immortality of the soul than any that philosophy ever produced. A mind like his can never die. Let the worshipful squire, H. L., the reverend Mass J. M., go into their primitive nothing. At best, they are but ill-digested lumps of chaos—only, one of them strongly tinged with bituminous particles and sulphureous effluvia. But my noble patron, eternal as the heroic swell of magnanimity and the generous throb of benevolence, shall look on with princely eye at "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

R. B.

No. XLVIII.

TO SIR JOHN WHITEFOORD, Bart.*

Edinburgh, 1*st December*, 1786.

Sir,

Mr. M'Kenzie, in Mauchline, my very warm and worthy friend, has informed me how much you are pleased to interest yourself in my fate as a man, and (what to me is incomparably dearer) my fame as a poet. I have, Sir, in one or two instances, been patronized by those of your character in life, when I was introduced to their notice by social friends to them, and honoured acquaintances to me; but you are the first gentleman in the country whose benevolence and goodness of heart has interested him for me, unsolicited and unknown. I am not master enough of the etiquette of these matters to know, nor did I stay to enquire, whether formal duty bade, or cold propriety disallowed, my thanking you in this manner, as I am convinced, from the light in which you kindly view me, that you will do me the justice to believe this letter is not the manœuvre of the needy, sharping author, fastening on those in upper life, who honour him with a little notice of him or his works. Indeed, the situation of poets is generally such, to a proverb, as may in some measure palliate that prostitution of heart and talents they have at times been guilty of. I do not think prodigality is, by any means, a necessary concomitant of a poetic turn, but I believe a careless, indolent inattention to economy is almost inseparable from it; then there must be in the heart of every bard of Nature's making a certain modest sensibility, mixed with a kind of pride, which will ever keep him out of the way of those windfalls of fortune, which frequently light on hardy impudence and fool-licking servility. It is not easy to imagine a more helpless state than his whose poetic fancy unfits him for the world, and whose character as a scholar gives him some pretensions to the *politesse* of life—yet is as poor as I am.

* Sir John Whitefoord was an unfortunate Scottish gentleman, proprietor of the estates of Ballochmyle and Whitefoord, Ayrshire, but compelled to live in Edinburgh by misfortune; a warm friend and defender of Burns.

For my part, I thank Heaven my star has been kinder; learning never elevated my ideas above the peasant's shed, and I have an independent fortune at the plough-tail.

I was surprised to hear that any one who pretended in the least to the manners of the gentleman should be so foolish, or worse, as to stoop to traduce the morals of such a one as I am, and so inhumanly cruel, too, as to meddle with that late most unfortunate, unhappy part of my story. With a tear of gratitude I thank you, Sir, for the warmth with which you interposed in behalf of my conduct. I am, I acknowledge, too frequently the sport of whim, caprice, and passion; but reverence to God, and integrity to my fellow-creatures, I hope I shall ever preserve. I have no return, Sir, to make you for your goodness but one—a return which, I am persuaded, will not be unacceptable—the honest warm wishes of a grateful heart for your happiness, and every one of that lovely flock who stand to you in a filial relation. If ever calumny aim the poisoned shaft at them, may friendship be by to ward the blow!

R. B.

No. XLIX.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq., MAUCHLINE.

Edinburgh, *December* 7, 1786.

Honoured Sir,

I have paid every attention to your commands, but can only say, what perhaps you will have heard before this reach you, that Muirkirklands* were bought by a John Gordon, W.S., but for whom I know not; Mauchlands, Haugh-Miln, &c., by a Frederick Fotheringham, supposed to be for Ballochmyle Laird; and Adamhill and Shaw-wood were bought for Oswald's folks. This is so imperfect an account, and will be so late ere it reach you, that were it not to discharge my conscience I would not trouble you with it; but after all my diligence I could make it no sooner nor better.

For my own affairs, I am in a fair way of becoming as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan; and you may expect henceforth to see my birth-day inserted among the wonderful events in the Poor Robin's and Aberdeen Almanacks, along with the black Monday, and the battle of Bothwell Bridge. My Lord Glencairn and the Dean of Faculty, Mr. H. Erskine, have taken me under their wing; and by all probability I shall soon be the tenth worthy, and the eighth wise man, of the world. Through my Lord's influence it is inserted in the records of the Caledonian Hunt, that they universally, one and all, subscribe for the second edition. My subscription bills come out to-morrow, and you shall have some of them next post. I have met, in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, what Solomon emphatically calls "A friend that sticketh closer than a brother." The warmth with which he interests himself in my affairs is of the same enthusiastic kind which you, Mr. Aiken, and the few patrons that took notice of my earlier poetic days, shewed for the poor unlucky devil of a poet.

I always remember Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy in my poetic prayers, but *you* both in prose and verse.

May cauld ne'er catch you but a hap,
Nor hunger but in Plenty's lap!

Amen! R. B.

* Lands of the Loudoun family, sold by public roup on December 5, 1786.

No. L.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., BANKER, AYR.

Edinburgh, 13*th December*, 1786.

My Honoured Friend,

I would not write you till I could have it in my power to give you some account of myself and my matters, which, by the bye, is often no easy task. I arrived here on Tuesday was se'nnight, and have suffered ever since I came to town with a miserable head-ache and stomach complaint, but am now a good deal better. I have found a worthy warm friend in Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield, who introduced me to Lord Glencairn, a man whose worth and brotherly kindness to me I shall remember when time will be no more. By his interest it is passed in the "Caledonian Hunt," and entered in their books, that they are to take each a copy of the second edition, for which they are to pay one guinea. I have been introduced to a good many of the *Noblesse*, but my avowed patrons and patronesses are the Duchess of Gordon—the Countess of Glencairn, with my Lord and Lady Betty—the Dean of Faculty—Sir John Whitefoord. I have likewise warm friends among the literati; Professors Stewart, Blair, and Mr. Mackenzie—the Man of Feeling. An unknown hand left ten guineas for the Ayrshire bard in Mr. Sibbald's hands, which I got. I since have discovered my generous unknown friend to be Patrick Miller, Esq., brother to the Justice Clerk; and drank a glass of claret with him, by invitation, at his own

house yesternight. I am nearly agreed with Creech to print my book, and I suppose I will begin on Monday. I will send a subscription bill or two next post, when I intend writing my first kind patron, Mr. Aiken. I saw his son to-day, and he is very well.

Dugald Stewart, and some of my learned friends, put me in the periodical paper called *The Lounger*, a copy of which I here enclose you. I was, Sir, when I was first honoured with your notice, too obscure; now I tremble lest I should be ruined by being dragged too suddenly into the glare of polite and learned observation.

I shall certainly, my ever honoured patron, write you an account of my every step; and better health and more spirits may enable me to make it something better than this stupid matter-of-fact epistle. I have the honour to be, good Sir, your ever most grateful humble servant,

R. B.

If any of my friends write me, my direction is, care of Mr. Creech, bookseller.

No. LI.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

EDINBURGH, 15*th December*, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

I DELAYED writing you till I was able to give you some rational account of myself and my affairs. I am got under the patronage of the Duchess of Gordon, Countess Dowager of Glencairn, Sir John Whitefoord, the Dean of Faculty, Professors Blair, Stewart, Greenfield, and several others of the noblesse and literati. I believe I shall begin at Mr. Creech's as my publisher. I am still undetermined as to the future; and, as usual, never think of it. I have now neither house nor home that I can call my own, and live on the world at large. I am just a poor wayfaring pilgrim on the road to Parnassus, a thoughtless wanderer and sojourner in a strange land. I received a very kind letter from Mr. A. Dalziel, for which please return my thanks; and tell him I will write him in a day or two. Mr. Parker, Charles, Dr. Corsan, and honest John, my *quondam* printer, I remember in my prayers when I pray in rhyme. To all of whom, till I have an opportunity [of saluting them in person, present my warmest remembrances.]

No. LII.

TO MR. ROBERT AIKEN, AYR.

EDINBURGH, 16*th December*, 1786.

DEAR PATRON OF MY VIRGIN MUSE,

I WROTE Mr. Ballantine at large all my operations and "eventful story," since I came to town. I have found in Mr. Creech, who is my agent forsooth, and Mr. Smellie who is to be my printer, that honour and goodness of heart which I always expect in Mr. Aiken's friends. Mr. Dalrymple of Orangefield I shall ever remember: my Lord Glencairn I shall ever pray for. The Maker of man has great honour in the workmanship of his Lordship's heart. May he find that patronage and protection in his guardian angel that I have found in him! His Lordship has sent a parcel of subscription bills to the Marquis of Graham, with downright orders to get them filled up with all the first Scottish names about court. He has likewise wrote to the Duke of Montague, and is about to write to the Duke of Portland, for their Graces' interest in behalf of the Scotch bard's subscription.

You will very probably think, my honoured friend, that a hint about the mischievous nature of intoxicated vanity may not be unseasonable; but, alas! you are wide of the mark. Various concurring circumstances have raised my fame as a poet to a height which I am absolutely certain I have not merits to support; and I look down on the future as I would into the bottomless pit.

You shall have one or two more bills when I have an opportunity of a carrier. I am ever, with the sincerest gratitude, honoured Sir, your most devoted humble servant,

R. B.

LIII.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

EDINBURGH, *December* 20, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE just time for the carrier, to tell you that I received your letter; of which I shall say no more but what a lass of my acquaintance said of her bastard wean; she said she "did na ken wha was the father exactly, but she suspected it was some o' thae bonnie blackguard smugglers, for it was like them." So I only say your obliging epistle was like you. I enclose you a parcel of subscription bills. Your affair of sixty copies is also like you: but it would not be like me to comply.

Your friend's notion of my life has put a crotchet in my head of sketching it in some future epistle to you. My compliments to Charles and Mr. Parker.

R. B.

No. LIV.

TO MR. WILLIAM CHALMERS, WRITER, AYR.

EDINBURGH, *December* 27, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CONFESS I have sinned the sin for which there is hardly any forgiveness—ingratitude to friendship—in not writing you sooner; but of all men living, I had intended to have sent you an entertaining letter; and by all the plodding, stupid powers, that in nodding, conceited majesty preside over the dull routine of business—a heavily solemn oath this!—I am, and have been, ever since I came to Edinburgh, as unfit to write a letter of humour, as to write a commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, who was banished to the Isle of Patmos by the cruel and bloody Domitian, son of Vespasian, and brother to Titus, both emperors of Rome, and who was himself an emperor, and raised the second or third persecution, I forget which, against the Christians, and after throwing the said Apostle John, brother to the Apostle James, commonly called James the Greater, to distinguish him from another James, who was, on some account or other, known by the name of James the Less—after throwing him into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which he was miraculously preserved, he banished the poor son of Zebedee to a desert island in the Archipelago, where he was gifted with the second sight, and saw as many wild beasts as I have seen since I came to Edinburgh; which, a circumstance not very uncommon in story-telling, brings me back to where I set out.

To make you some amends for what, before you reach this paragraph, you will have suffered, I enclose you two poems I have carded and spun since I past Glenbuck. One blank in the Address to Edinburgh—"Fair B——," is heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter to Lord Monboddo, at whose house I had the honour to be more than once. There has not been anything nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed since Milton's Eve on the first day of her existence.

I have sent you a parcel of subscription bills, and have written to Mr. Ballantine and Mr. Aiken to call on you for some of them, if they want them. My direction is, care of Andrew Bruce, merchant, Bridge Street.

No. LV.

TO MR. JAMES SIBBALD, BOOKSELLER.

LAWNMARKET, 1787.

SIR,

So little am I acquainted with the modes and manners of the more public and polished walks of life, that I often feel myself much embarrassed how to express the feelings of my heart, particularly gratitude.

> "Rude am I in speech,
> And little blest in the set, polish'd phrase;
> For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
> Till now—some nine moons wasted—they have used
> Their dearest efforts in the rural field;
> And therefore, little can I grace my cause
> In speaking for myself."

The warmth with which you have befriended an obscure man and young Author in your three last Magazines—I can only say, Sir, I feel the weight of the obligation, and wish I could express my sense of it. In the meantime accept of this conscious acknowledgement from, Sir, your obliged servant,

R. B.

No. LVI.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

EDINBURGH, *7th January*, 1787.

. . . . To tell the truth among friends, I feel a miserable blank in my heart, with want of her, and I don't think I shall ever meet with so delicious an armful again. She has her faults; and so have you and I; and so has everybody:

> "Their tricks and craft hae put me daft;
> They 've ta'en me in and a' that;
> But clear your decks, and here 's "The Sex!
> I like the jads for a' that;
> For a' that and a' that,
> And twice as muckle's a' that," &c.
>
> . . . . . .

I have met with a very pretty girl, a Lothian farmer's daughter, whom I have almost persuaded to accompany me to the west country, should I ever return to settle there. By the by, a Lothian farmer is about an Ayrshire Squire of the lower kind; and I had a most delicious ride from Leith to her house yesternight, in a hackney-coach, with her brother and two sisters, and brother's wife. We

had dined all together at a common friend's house in Leith, and danced, drank, and sang till late enough. The night was dark, the claret had been good, and I thirsty.

. . . .

R. B.

No. LVII.

TO MR. MACKENZIE, SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.

EDINBURGH, 11*th January*, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOURS gave me something like the pleasure of an old friend's face. I saw your friend and my honoured patron, Sir John Whitefoord, just after I read your letter, and gave him your respectful compts. He was pleased to say many handsome things of you, which I heard with the more satisfaction, as I knew them to be just.

His son John, who calls very frequently on me, is in a fuss to-day like a coronation. This is the great day—the assembly and ball of the Caledonian Hunt; and John has had the good luck to pre-engage the hand of the beauty-famed and wealth-celebrated Miss M'Adam, our countrywoman. Between friends, John is desperately in for it there, and I am afraid will be desperate indeed.

I am sorry to send you the last speech and dying words of *The Lounger*.

A gentleman waited on me yesterday and gave me, by Lord Eglintoun's order, ten guineas by way of subscription for a brace of copies of my 2nd edition.

I met with Lord Maitland and a brother of his to-day at breakfast. They are exceedingly easy, accessible, agreeable fellows, and seemingly pretty clever. I am ever, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. LVIII.

TO THE EARL OF EGLINTON.*

EDINBURGH, 11*th January*, 1787.

MY LORD,

As I have but slender pretensions to philosophy, I cannot rise to the exalted ideas of a citizen of the world; but have all those national prejudices, which I believe glow peculiarly strong in the breast of a Scotsman. There is scarcely any thing to which I am so feelingly alive as the honour and welfare of my country: and as a poet, I have no higher enjoyment than singing her sons and daughters. Fate had cast my station in the veriest shades of life; but never did a heart pant more ardently than mine to be distinguished; though till very lately I looked in vain on every side for a ray of light. It is easy then to guess how much I was gratified with the countenance and approbation of one of my country's most illustrious sons, when Mr. Wauchope called on me yesterday on the part of your Lordship. Your munificence, my Lord, certainly deserves my very grateful acknowledgments; but your patronage is a bounty peculiarly suited to my feelings. I am not master enough of the etiquette of life to know whether there be not some impropriety in troubling your Lordship with my thanks, but my heart whispered me to do it. From the emotions of my inmost soul I do it. Selfish ingratitude I hope I am incapable of; and mercenary servility, I trust, I shall ever have as much honest pride as to detest.

R. B.

No. LIX.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ.

EDINBURGH, 14*th January*, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

IT gives me a secret comfort to observe in myself that I am not yet so far gone as Willie Gaw's Skate, "past redemption;" for I have still this favourable symptom of grace, that when my conscience, as in the case of this letter, tells me that I am leaving something undone that I ought to do, it teases me eternally till I do it.

I am still "dark as was chaos" in respect to futurity. My generous friend, Mr. Peter Miller, brother to the Justice Clerk, has been talking with me about a lease of some farm or other in an estate called Dalswinton, which he has lately bought, near Dumfries. Some life-rented embittering recollections whisper me that I will be happier any where than in my old neighbourhood, but Mr. Miller is no judge of land; and though I dare say he means to favour me, yet he may give me, in his opinion, an advantageous bargain that may ruin me. I am to take a tour by Dumfries as I return, and have promised to meet Mr. Miller on his lands some time in May.

I went to a mason-lodge yesternight, where the most Worshipful Grand Master, Charteris, and all the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited. The meeting was numerous and elegant; all the different lodges about town were present, in all their pomp.

* Hugh Montgomery. He was twelfth Earl of Eglinton, and died very old in 1819.

The Grand Master, who presided with great solemnity and honour to himself as a gentleman and mason, among other general toasts gave "Caledonia, and Caledonia's Bard, Brother B ——," which rung through the whole assembly with multiplied honours and repeated acclamations. As I had no idea such a thing would happen, I was downright thunderstruck, and, trembling in every nerve, made the best return in my power. Just as I had finished, some of the grand officers said, so loud that I could hear, with a most comforting accent, "Very well, indeed!" which set me something to rights again.

I have to-day corrected my 152nd page. My best good wishes to Mr. Aiken. I am ever, dear Sir, your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. LX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 15*th January*, 1787.

MADAM,

YOURS of the 9th current, which I am this moment honoured with, is a deep reproach to me for ungrateful neglect. I will tell you the real truth, for I am miserably awkward at a fib. I wished to have written to Dr. Moore before I wrote to you; but though every day since I received yours of December 30th, the idea, the wish to write to him, has constantly pressed on my thoughts, yet I could not for my soul set about it. I know his fame and character, and I am one of "the sons of little men." To write him a mere matter-of-fact affair, like a merchant's order, would be disgracing the little character I have; and to write the author of "The View of Society and Manners" a letter of sentiment—I declare every artery runs cold at the thought. I shall try, however, to write to him to-morrow or next day. His kind interposition in my behalf I have already experienced, as a gentleman waited on me the other day, on the part of Lord Eglintoun, with ten guineas, by way of subscription for two copies of my next edition.

The word you object to in the mention I have made of my glorious countryman and your immortal ancestor, is indeed borrowed from Thomson; but it does not strike me as an improper epithet. I distrusted my own judgment on your finding fault with it, and applied for the opinion of some of the literati here, who honour me with their critical strictures, and they all allow it to be proper. The song you ask I cannot recollect, and I have not a copy of it. I have not composed any thing on the great Wallace, except what you have seen in print; and the inclosed, which I will print in this edition. You will see I have mentioned some others of the name. When I composed my "Vision" long ago, I had attempted a description of Kyle, of which the additional stanzas are a part as it originally stood. My heart glows with a wish to be able to do justice to the merits of the "Saviour of his Country," which sooner or later I shall at least attempt.

You are afraid I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet; alas! Madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not mean any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened, informed age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company—to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head—I assure you, Madam, I do not dissemble when I tell you I tremble for the consequences. The novelty of a poet in my obscure situation, without any of those advantages which are reckoned necessary for that character, at least at this time of day, has raised a partial tide of public notice which has borne me to a height, where I am absolutely, feelingly certain, my abilities are inadequate to support me; and too surely do I see that time when the same tide will leave me, and recede perhaps as far below the mark of truth. I do not say this in the ridiculous affectation of self-abasement and modesty. I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion, in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you, once for all, to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it. But,

"When proud fortune's ebbing tide recedes,"

you will bear me witness, that when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward with rueful resolve to the hastening time when the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground, with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph.

. . . . . .

Your patronizing me and interesting yourself in my fame and character as a poet, I rejoice in; it exalts me in my own idea; and whether you can or cannot aid me in my subscription is a trifle. Has a paltry subscription-bill any charms to the heart of a bard, compared with the patronage of the descendant of the immortal Wallace?

R. B.

No. LXI.

TO DR. JOHN MOORE, LONDON.*

EDINBURGH, 17*th January*, 1787.

SIR,

MRS. DUNLOP has been so kind as to send me extracts of letters she has had from you, where you do the rustic bard the honour of noticing him and his works. Those who have felt the anxieties and solicitudes of authorship can only know what pleasure it gives to be noticed in such a manner, by judges of the first character. Your criticisms, Sir, I receive with reverence; only I am sorry they mostly came too late; a peccant passage or two that I would certainly have altered were gone to the press.

The hope to be admired for ages is, in by far the greatest part of those even who are authors of repute, an unsubstantial dream. For my part, my first ambition was, and still my strongest wish is, to please my compeers, the rustic inmates of the hamlet, while ever-changing language and manners shall allow me to be relished and understood. I am very willing to admit that I have some poetical abilities; and as few if any writers, either moral or poetical, are intimately acquainted with the classes of mankind among whom I have chiefly mingled, I may have seen men and manners in a different phasis from what is common, which may assist originality of thought. Still I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had: and in a language where Pope and Churchill have raised the laugh, and Shenstone and Gray drawn the tear; where Thomson and Beattie have painted the landscape, and Lyttelton and Collins described the heart—I am not vain enough to hope for distinguished poetic fame.†

R. B.

No. LXII.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.‡

FEBRUARY, 1787.

MY LORD,

THE honour your Lordship has done me, by your notice and advice in yours of the 1st instant, I shall ever gratefully remember :—

> "Praise from thy lips 'tis mine with joy to boast,
> They best can give it who deserve it most."

Your Lordship touches the darling chord of my heart, when you advise me to fire my Muse at Scottish story and Scottish scenes. I wish for nothing more than to make a leisurely pilgrimage through my native country; to sit and muse on those once hard-contended fields, where Caledonia, rejoicing, saw her bloody Lion borne through broken ranks to victory and fame; and, catching the inspiration, to pour the deathless names in song. But, my Lord, in the midst of these delighting enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and with the frigid air of a declaiming preacher, sets off with a text of Scripture, thus—

"I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes, merely to give you pain: I wish through these wounds to imprint a lasting lesson on your heart. I will not mention how many of my salutary advices you have despised: I have given you line upon line, and precept upon precept; but while I have been chalking you out the right way to wealth and godly character, you, with audacious effrontery have zigzagged across the path, contemning me to my face: you know the consequences. It is not yet three months since home was so hot for your stay that you were on the wing for the western side of the Atlantic, not to make a fortune, but to hide your disgrace.

"Now that your dear-loved Scotia, about whom you make such a racket, puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these will-o'-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from Want; but still it is half a step from it. If all that I can say is ineffectual, let her who seldom calls to you in vain, let the call of Pride prevail with you. You know how you feel at the iron grip of ruthless oppression; you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I tender you the conveniences, the comforts of life, independence and character, on the one hand; I hold you out servility, dependence, and wretchedness, on the other. I will not insult your common sense by bidding you make a choice."

This, my Lord, is an unanswerable harangue. I must return to my humble station, and woo my rustic Muse in my wonted way at the plough-tail. Still, my Lord, while the drops of life warm my heart, gratitude to that dear-loved country in which I boast my birth, and gratitude to those her distinguished sons, who have honoured me so much with their patronage and approbation, shall, while stealing through my humble shades, ever distend my bosom, and at times draw forth, as now, the swelling tear.

R. B.

* See LIFE.

† Dr. Moore answered this letter in a very flattering style, 23rd January.

‡ See LIFE.

No. LXIII.

TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN.*

"Oh, whare did ye get that hauver meal bannock," &c.†

Dear Cleghorn,

You will see by the above that I have added a stanza to "Bonnie Dundee." If you think it will do, you may set it agoing—

"Upon a ten-string'd instrument,
And on the psaltery."

R. B.

To Mr. Cleghorn, farmer. God bless the trade!

No. LXIV.

TO THE REV. GEORGE LAWRIE, NEWMILNS, NEAR KILMARNOCK.

Edinburgh, *February* 5, 1787.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

When I look at the date of your kind letter, my heart reproaches me severely with ingratitude in neglecting so long to answer it. I will not trouble you with any account, by way of apology, of my hurried life and distracted attention; do me the justice to believe that my delay by no means proceeded from want of respect. I feel, and ever shall feel for you, the mingled sentiments of esteem for a friend, and reverence for a father.

I thank you, Sir, with all my soul for your friendly hints, though I do not need them so much as my friends are apt to imagine. You are dazzled with newspaper accounts and distant reports; but, in reality, I have no great temptation to be intoxicated with the cup of prosperity. Novelty may attract the attention of mankind awhile; to it I owe my present *éclat;* but I see the time not far distant when the popular tide which has borne me to a height of which I am, perhaps, unworthy, shall recede with silent celerity, and leave me a barren waste of sand, to descend at my leisure to my former station. I do not say this in the affectation of modesty; I see the consequence is unavoidable, and am prepared for it. I had been at a good deal of pains to form a just, impartial estimate of my intellectual powers before I came here; I have not added, since I came to Edinburgh, anything to the account; and I trust I shall take every atom of it back to my shades, the coverts of my unnoticed early years.

In Dr. Blacklock, whom I see very often, I have found what I would have expected in our friend—a clear head and an excellent heart.

By far the most agreeable hours I spend in Edinburgh must be placed to the account of Miss Lawrie and her pianoforte. I cannot help repeating to you and Mrs. Lawrie a compliment that Mr. Mackenzie, the celebrated "Man of Feeling," paid to Miss Lawrie the other night at the concert. I had come in at the interlude, and sat down by him till I saw Miss Lawrie in a seat not very far distant, and went up to pay my respects to her. On my return to Mr. Mackenzie he asked me who she was; I told him 'twas the daughter of a reverend friend of mine in the West country. He returned, there was something very striking, to his idea, in her appearance. On my desiring to know what it was, he was pleased to say: "She has a great deal of the elegance of a well-bred lady about her, with all the sweet simplicity of a country girl."

My compliments to all the happy inmates of St. Margaret's. I am, my dear Sir, yours most gratefully,

R. B.

No. LXV.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE BAILIES OF CANONGATE, EDINBURGH.

6th February, 1787.

Gentlemen,

I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talents for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your church-yard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown.

Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they wish to shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory—a tribute I wish to have the honour of paying.

I petition you then, Gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over his revered ashes, to remain an unalienable property to his deathless fame. I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your very humble servant,

R. B.

* Cleghorn of Saughton Mills, Edinburgh. † See vol. ii. p. 8.

No. LXVI.

TO MR. PETER STUART.*

EDINBURGH, *February*, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOU may think, and too justly, that I am a selfish, ungrateful fellow, having received so many repeated instances of kindness from you, and yet never putting pen to paper to say, thank you; but if you knew what a devil of a life my conscience has led me on that account, your good heart would think yourself too much avenged. By the by, there is nothing, in the whole frame of man, which seems to me so unaccountable as that thing called Conscience. Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are to the workings of passion as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun: and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than, amidst the bitter native consequences of folly, in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts Conscience and harrows us with the feelings of the damned.

I have enclosed you, by way of expiation, some verse and prose, that, if they merit a place in your truly entertaining miscellany, you are welcome to. The prose extract is literally as Mr. Sprott sent it me.

The inscription on the stone will be as follows:—

"HERE LIES ROBERT FERGUSSON, POET.

Born, September 5, 1751.—Died, 16th October, 1774.

No sculptur'd marble here, nor pompous lay,
'No storied urn nor animated bust,'
This simple stone directs pale SCOTIA'S way
To pour her sorrows o'er her POET'S dust."

On the other side of the stone will be inscribed:—

"By special grant of the Managers to Robert Burns, who erected this stone, this burial-place is to remain for ever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson."

R. B.

No. LXVII.

TO DR. MOORE, LONDON.

EDINBURGH, 15*th February*, 1787.

REVERED SIR,

PARDON my seeming neglect in delaying so long to acknowledge the honour you have done me in your kind notice of me, January 23rd. Not many months ago I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast anything higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this of late I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities.

For the honour Miss Williams has done me, please, Sir, return her in my name my most grateful thanks. I have more than once thought of paying her in kind, but have hitherto quitted the idea in hopeless despondency. I had never before heard of her; but the other day I got her poems, which for several reasons, some belonging to the head, and others the offspring of the heart, give me a great deal of pleasure. I have little pretensions to critic lore; there are, I think, two characteristic features in her poetry—the unfettered wild flight of native genius, and the querulous, *sombre* tenderness of "time-settled sorrow."

I only know what pleases me, often without being able to tell why. †

No. LXVIII.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

EDINBURGH, 24*th February*, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

I WILL soon be with you now "in guid black prent;" in a week or two at farthest. I am obliged, against my own wish, to print subscribers' names; so if any of my Ayr friends have subscription bills, they must be sent in to Creech directly. I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver; and if it can be ready in time, I will appear in my book looking, like all other fools, to my title-page. I have the honour to be, ever your grateful,

R. B.

* Editor of the *Star* newspaper, London.

† Dr. Moore also kindly answered this letter, 28th February, 1787.

No. LXIX.

TO THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE.*

Sir,

I shewed the enclosed political ballad to my Lord Glencairn, to have his opinion whether I should publish it; as I suspect my political tenets, such as they are, may be rather heretical in the opinion of some of my best friends. I have a few first principles in religion and politics, which, I believe, I would not easily part with; but for all the etiquette of, by whom, in what manner, &c., I would not have a dissocial word about it with any one of God's creatures, particularly an honoured patron or a respected friend. His Lordship seems to think the piece may appear in print, but desired me to send you a copy for your suffrage. I am, with the sincerest gratitude for the notice with which you have been pleased to honour the rustic bard, Sir, your most devoted, humble servant,

Two o'clock. R. B.

No. LXX.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.†

Edinburgh, *February*, 1787.

My Lord,

I wanted to purchase a profile of your Lordship, which I was told was to be got in town; but I am truly sorry to see that a blundering painter has spoiled a "human face divine." The enclosed stanzas I intended to have written below a picture or profile of your Lordship, could I have been so happy as to procure one with any thing of a likeness.

As I will soon return to my shades, I wanted to have something like a material object for my gratitude; I wanted to have it in my power to say to a friend, there is my noble patron, my generous benefactor. Allow me, my Lord, to publish these verses. I conjure your Lordship by the honest throe of gratitude, by the generous wish of benevolence, by all the powers and feelings which compose the magnanimous mind, do not deny me this petition. I owe much to your Lordship; and, what has not in some other instances always been the case with me, the weight of the obligation is a pleasing load. I trust I have a heart as independent as your Lordship's, than which I can say nothing more; and I would not be beholden to favours that would crucify my feelings. Your dignified character in life, and manner of supporting that character, are flattering to my pride; and I would be jealous of the purity of my grateful attachment, where I was under the patronage of one of the much favoured sons of fortune.

Almost every poet has celebrated his patrons, particularly when they were names dear to fame, and illustrious in their country; allow me then, my Lord, if you think the verses have intrinsic merit, to tell the world how much I have the honour to be your Lordship's highly indebted and ever grateful, humble servant,

R. B.

* Enclosing fragment—"When Guildford Good." † See Life.

No. LXXI.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

Edinburgh, *March* 8, 1787.

Dear Sir,

Yours came safe, and I am, as usual, much indebted to your goodness. Poor Captain Montgomery is cast. Yesterday it was tried whether the husband could proceed against the unfortunate lover without first divorcing his wife; and their Gravities on the Bench were unanimously of opinion that Maxwell may prosecute for damages directly, and need not divorce his wife at all if he pleases; and Maxwell is immediately, before the Lord Ordinary, to prove, what I dare say will not be denied, the crim-con. Then their Lordships will modify the damages, which I suppose will be pretty heavy, as their Wisdoms have expressed great abhorrence of my gallant right worshipful brother's conduct.

O all ye powers of love unfortunate, and friendless woe! pour the balm of sympathizing pity on the grief-torn, tender heart of the hapless fair one!

My two songs on Miss W. Alexander and Miss Peggy Kennedy were likewise tried yesterday by a jury of literati, and found defamatory libels against the fastidious powers of Poesy and Taste; and the author forbidden to print them under pain of forfeiture of character. I cannot help almost shedding a tear to the memory of two songs that had cost me some pains, and that I valued a good deal; but I must submit.

My most respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton, and Miss Kennedy.

My poor unfortunate songs come again across my memory; d—n the pedant, frigid soul of criticism for ever and ever! I am ever, dear Sir, your obliged,

R. B.

No. LXXII.

TO MR. JAMES CANDLISH,*

STUDENT IN PHYSIC, COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

EDINBURGH, *March* 21, 1787.

MY EVER DEAR OLD ACQUAINTANCE,

I WAS equally surprised and pleased at your letter; though I dare say you will think by my delaying so long to write to you, that I am so drowned in the intoxication of good fortune as to be indifferent to old, and once dear connections. The truth is, I was determined to write a good letter, full of argument, amplification, erudition, and, as Bayes says, *all that*. I thought of it, and thought of it, but for my soul, I cannot; and lest you should mistake the cause of my silence, I just sit down to tell you so. Don't give yourself credit though, that the strength of your logic scares me: the truth is, I never mean to meet you on that ground at all. You have shown me one thing which was to be demonstrated; that strong pride of reasoning, with a little affectation of singularity, may mislead the best of hearts. I, likewise, since you and I were first acquainted, in the pride of despising old women's stories, ventured in "the daring path Spinoza trod," but experience of the weakness, not the strength of human powers, made me glad to grasp at revealed religion.

I must stop, but don't impute my brevity to a wrong cause. I am still, in the Apostle Paul's phrase, "the old man with his deeds" as when we were sporting about the lady-thorn. I shall be four weeks here yet, at least; and so I shall expect to hear from you—welcome sense, welcome nonsense. I am, with warmest sincerity, my dear old friend, yours, &c.

R. B.

No. LXXIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 22*nd March*, 1787.

MADAM,

I READ your letter with watery eyes. A little, very little while ago, I had scarce a friend but the stubborn pride of my own bosom; now I am distinguished, patronized, befriended by you. Your friendly advices, I will not give them the cold name of criticisms, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here, but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honour of giving me his strictures: his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly.

You kindly interest yourself in my future views and prospects; there I can give you no light. It is all

> "Dark as was Chaos ere the infant sun
> Was roll'd together, or had tried his beams
> Athwart the gloom profound."

The appellation of a Scottish bard is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition. Scottish scenes and Scottish story are the themes I could wish to sing. I have no dearer aim than to have it in my power, unplagued with the routine of business—for which Heaven knows I am unfit enough—to make leisurely pilgrimages through Caledonia; to sit on the fields of her battles; to wander on the romantic banks of her rivers; and to muse by the stately towers or venerable ruins, once the honoured abodes of her heroes.

But these are all Utopian thoughts: I have dallied long enough with life; 'tis time to be in earnest. I have a fond, an aged mother to care for: and some other bosom ties perhaps equally tender. Where the individual only suffers by the consequences of his own thoughtlessness, indolence, or folly, he may be excusable: nay, shining abilities, and some of the nobler virtues, may half sanctify a heedless character; but where God and nature have entrusted the welfare of others to his care, where the trust is sacred, and the ties are dear, that man must be far gone in selfishness, or strangely lost to reflection, whom these connections will not rouse to exertion.

I guess that I shall clear between two and three hundred pounds by my authorship; with that sum I intend, so far as I may be said to have any intention, to return to my old acquaintance, the plough, and if I can meet with a lease by which I can live, to commence farmer. I do not intend to give up poetry; being bred to labour, secures me independence, and the Muses are my chief, sometimes have been my only enjoyment. If my practice second my resolution, I shall have principally at heart the serious business of life; but while following my plough, or building up my shocks, I shall cast a leisure glance to that dear, that only feature of my character, which gave me the notice of my country, and the patronage of a Wallace.

Thus, honoured Madam, I have given you the bard, his situation, and his views, native as they are in his own bosom.

R. B.

* Mr. Candlish married Miss Smith, one of the Mauchline belles, and she became mother to the late Dr. Candlish. Mr. Candlish died in 1806.

No. LXXIV.

THE AUTHOR'S EDINBURGH COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

EDINBURGH, *April* 9, 1787.

As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter to Mr. Palgrave, that "half a word fixed, upon or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making my remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me, some one to be grave with me, some one to please me and help my discrimination, with his or her own remark, and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them, except where that observation is a sucker, or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel-writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, whether we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship, as that one man may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect which man deserves from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

For these reasons, I am determined to make these pages my confident. I will sketch every character that anyway strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes, and take down remarks, in the old law-phrase, "without feud or favour." Where I hit on anything clever, my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and, begging Patroclus' and Achates' pardon, I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

My own private story likewise, my love adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light—shall be occasionally inserted. In short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since confidence went first to market, or honesty was set up to sale.

To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I would cheerfully make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sexes, when their interests are united and absorbed by the tie of love—

> "When thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart."

There confidence—confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion—that endears them the more to each other's hearts, unreservedly "reigns and revels." But this is not my lot; and in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the bye, I have no great chance of being), my fate shou'd be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, "to watch alone on the house-tops." Oh the pity!

. . . . . .

There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius, nay, of avowed worth, is received everywhere, with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of fortune, meets. I imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving "honour to whom honour is due;" he meets at a great man's table, a Squire Something, or a Sir Somebody; he knows the noble landlord at heart gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes beyond, perhaps, any one at table; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow whose abilities would scarcely have made an eightpenny tailor, and whose heart is not worth three-farthings, meet with attention and notice that are withheld from the sons of genius and poverty!

The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He shewed so much attention, engrossing attention, one day, to the only blockhead at table (the whole company consisted of his lordship, dunderpate, and myself), that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand and looked so benevolently good at parting. God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am as capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

With Dr. Blair I am more at my ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called liking. When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, What do I care for him or his pomp either?

It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one; but, in my opinion, Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof of what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance; but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and

a critic of the first, the very first, rank in prose; even in poetry, a bard of Nature's making can only take the *pas* of him. He has a heart, not of the finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is a truly worthy and most respectable character.

No. LXXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 15*th April*, 1787.

MADAM,

THERE is an affectation of gratitude which I dislike. The periods of Johnson and the pauses of Sterne may hide a selfish heart. For my part, Madam, I trust I have too much pride for servility, and too little prudence for selfishness. I have this moment broken open your letter, but

> "Rude am I in speech,
> And therefore little can I grace the cause,
> In speaking of myself;"

so I shall not trouble you with my fine speeches and hunted figures. I shall just lay my hand on my heart, and say, I hope I shall ever have the truest, the warmest sense of your goodness.

I come abroad in print for certain on Wednesday. Your orders I shall punctually attend to; only, by the way, I must tell you that I was paid before for Dr. Moore's and Miss Williams' copies, through the medium of Commissioner Cochrane in this place: but that we can settle when I have the honour of waiting on you.

Dr. Smith was just gone to London the morning before I received your letter to him.

R. B.

No. LXXVI.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

EDINBURGH, 18*th April*, 1787.

SIR,

I HAVE taken the liberty to send a hundred copies of my book to your care. . . . I trouble you then, Sir, to find a proper person (of the mercantile folks I suppose will be best) that for a moderate consideration will retail the books to subscribers, as they are called for. Several of the subscription bills have been mislaid, so all who say they have subscribed must be served at subscription price; otherwise, those who have not subscribed must pay six shillings. Should more copies be needed, an order by post will be immediately answered.

My respectful compliments to Mr. Aiken. I wrote him by David Shaw, which I hope he received.

I have the honour to be, with the most grateful sincerity, Sir, your obliged and very humble servant,

R. B.

No. LXXVII.

TO DR. JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

EDINBURGH, 23*rd April*, 1787.

I RECEIVED the books, and sent the one you mentioned to Mrs. Dunlop. I am ill-skilled in beating the coverts of imagination for metaphors of gratitude. I thank you, Sir, for the honour you have done me; and to my latest hour will warmly remember it. To be highly pleased with your book is what I have in common with the world; but to regard the volumes as a mark of the author's friendly esteem, is a still more supreme gratification.

I leave Edinburgh in the course of ten days or a fortnight, and after a few pilgrimages over some of the classic ground of Caledonia, Cowdenknowes, Banks of Yarrow, Tweed, &c., I shall return to my rural shades, in all likelihood never more to quit them. I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. If once this tangent flight of mine were over, and I were returned to my wonted leisurely motion in my old circle, I may probably endeavour to return her poetic compliment in kind.*

R. B.

* Dr. Moore wrote a friendly and flattering reply, dated May 23, 1787.

No. LXXVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 30*th April*, 1787.

. . . . YOUR criticisms, Madam, I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel. Poets, much my superiors, have so flattered those who possessed the adventitious qualities of wealth and power, that I am determined to flatter no created being either in prose or verse.

I set as little by kings, lords, clergy, critics, &c., as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by and by—illiberal abuse, and perhaps contemptuous neglect.

I am happy, Madam, that some of my own favourite pieces are distinguished by your particular approbation. For my "Dream," which has unfortunately incurred your loyal displeasure, I hope, in four weeks or less, to have the honour of appearing at Dunlop in its defence, in person.

R. B.

No. LXXIX.

TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR, W.S.

LAWNMARKET, *Monday Morning, April*, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

IN justice to Spenser, I must acknowledge that there is scarcely a poet in the language could have been a more agreeable present to me; and in justice to you, allow me to say, Sir, that I have not met with a man in Edinburgh to whom I would so willingly have been indebted for the gift. The tattered rhymes I herewith present you, and the handsome volumes of Spenser for which I am so much indebted to your goodness, may perhaps be not in proportion to one another; but be that as it may, my gift, though far less valuable, is as sincere a mark of esteem as yours.

The time is approaching when I shall return to my shades; and I am afraid my numerous Edinburgh friendships are of so tender a construction, that they will not bear carriage with me. Yours is one of the few that I could wish of a more robust constitution. It is indeed very probable that when I leave this city, we part never more to meet in this sublunary sphere; but I have a strong fancy that in some future eccentric planet, the comet of happier systems than any with which astronomy is yet acquainted, you and I, among the harum-scarum sons of imagination and whim, with a hearty shake of a hand, a metaphor, and a laugh, shall recognize old acquaintances:

> "Where Wit may sparkle all its rays,
> Uncurst with Caution's fears;
> And Pleasure, basking in the blaze,
> Rejoice for endless years."

I have the honour to be, with the warmest sincerity, dear Sir, yours ever,

R. B.

No. LXXX.

TO THE REV. DR. HUGH BLAIR.

LAWNMARKET, *Edinburgh, 3rd May*, 1787.

REV. AND MUCH RESPECTED SIR,

I LEAVE Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship you have shewn me. I often felt the embarrassment of my singular situation; drawn forth from the veriest shades of life to the glare of remark; and honoured by the notice of those illustrious names of my country, whose works, while they are applauded to the end of time, will ever instruct and mend the heart. However the meteor-like novelty of my appearance in the world might attract notice, and honour me with the acquaintance of the permanent lights of genius and literature, those who are truly benefactors of the immortal nature of man; I knew very well that my utmost merit was far unequal to the task of preserving that character, when once the novelty was over: I have made up my mind that abuse, or almost even neglect, will not surprise me in my quarters.

I have sent you a proof impression of Beugo's work for me, done on India paper, as a trifling but sincere testimony with what heart-warm gratitude I am, &c.*

R. B.

No. LXXXI.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, MUSIC ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

LAWNMARKET, *4th May*, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you a song never before known, for your collection; the air by Mr. M'Gibbon, but I know

* Dr. Blair responded in a cold but good spirit.

not the author of the words, which I got from Dr. Blacklock.

Farewell, my dear Sir! I wished to have seen you, but I have been decidedly throng, as I march to-morrow.

Had my acquaintance with you been a little older, I would have asked the favour of your correspondence; as I have met with few people whose company and conversation gave me so much pleasure, because I have met with few whose sentiments are so congenial to my own.

When Dunbar and you meet, tell him I left Edinburgh with the idea of him hanging somewhere about my heart.

Keep the original of this song till we meet again, whenever that may be.

R. B.

No. LXXXII.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

LAWNMARKET, *Friday, noon.*

MY LORD,

I GO away to-morrow morning early, and allow me to vent the fulness of my heart in thanking your Lordship for all that patronage, that benevolence, and that friendship with which you have honoured me. With brimful eyes, I pray that you may find, in that great Being whose image you so nobly bear, that Friend which I have found in you. My gratitude is not selfish design—that I disdain; it is not dodging after the heel of greatness—that is an offering you disdain. It is a feeling of the same kind with my devotion.

R. B.

No. LXXXIII.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, Esq., LONDON.*

SELKIRK, 13*th May*, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

THE enclosed I have just wrote, nearly extempore, in a solitary inn in Selkirk, after a miserable wet day's riding. I have been over most of East Lothian, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirk shires, and next week I begin a tour through the north of England. Yesterday I dined with Lady Harriet, sister to my noble patron †—*Quem Deus conservet!* I would write till I would tire you as much with dull prose, as I dare say by this time you are with wretched verse; but I am jaded to death; so, with a grateful farewell, I have the honour to be, good Sir, yours sincerely.

R. B.

* Enclosing poem, "Willie 's awa." See vol. i. p. 118.
† James, Earl of Glencairn.

No. LXXXIV.

TO MR. PETER HILL,

CARE OF MR. CREECH, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

May 17, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

IF Mr. Alexander Pattison, or Mr. Cowan from Paisley, or in general, any other of those to whom I have sent copies on credit before, apply to you, you will give them what number they demand, when they require it; provided always that those who are non-subscribers shall pay one shilling more than subscribers. This I write to you when I am miserably "fou," consequently it must be the sentiments of my heart.

R. B.

No. LXXXV.

TO MR. PATTISON, BOOKSELLER, PAISLEY.

BERRYWELL, NEAR DUNSE, *May* 17, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I AM sorry I was out of Edinburgh, making a slight pilgrimage to the classic scenes of this country, when I was favoured with yours of the 11th instant, enclosing an order of the Paisley Banking Company on the Royal Bank, for twenty-two pounds, seven shillings sterling, payment in full, after carriage deducted, for ninety copies of my book I sent you. According to your motions, I see you will have left Scotland before this reaches you, otherwise I would send you "Holy Willie" with all my heart. I was so hurried that I absolutely forgot several things I ought to have minded, among the rest, sending books to Mr. Cowan; but any order of yours will be answered at Creech's shop. You will please remember that non-subscribers pay six shillings, this is Creech's profit; but those who have subscribed, though their names have been neglected in the printed list, which

is very incorrect, are supplied at the subscription price. I was not at Glasgow, nor do I intend for London; and I think Mrs. Fame is very idle to tell so many lies on a poor poet. When you or Mr. Cowan write for copies, if you should want any, direct to Mr. Hill, at Mr. Creech's shop; and I write to Mr. Hill by this post, to answer either of your orders. Hill is Mr. Creech's first clerk,* and Creech himself is presently in London. I suppose I shall have the pleasure, against your return to Paisley, of assuring you how much I am, dear Sir, your obliged humble servant.

R. B.

No. LXXXVI.

TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL,†

CLASSICAL MASTER, HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

CARLISLE, *June* 1, 1787.

KIND, HONEST-HEARTED WILLIE,

I'M sitten down here, after seven and forty miles ridin', e'en as forjesket and forniaiw'd as a forfough'en cock, to gie you some notion o' my land-lowper-like stravaguin sen the sorrowful hour that I sheuk hands and parted wi' Auld Reekie.

My auld, ga'd gleyde o' a meere has huchyall'd up hill and down brae, in Scotland and England, as teugh and birnie as a vera devil wi' me.‡ It 's true, she 's as poor 's a sangmaker and as hard 's a kirk, and tipper-taipers when she taks the gate first, like a lady's gentlewoman in a minuwae, or a hen on a het girdle; but she 's a yauld, poutherie Girran for a' that, and has a stomack like Willie Stalker's meere that wad hae disgeested tumbler-wheels, for she 'll whip me aff her five stimparts o' the best aits at a down-sittin' and ne'er fash her thumb. When ance her ringbanes and spavies, her cruicks and cramps, are fairly soupl'd, she beets to, beets to, and aye the hindmost hour the tightest. I could wager her price to a thretty pennies, that, for twa or three wooks ridin' at fifty mile a day, the deil-sticket a five galloppers acqueesh Clyde and Whithorn could cast saut on her tail.

I hae dander'd owre a' the kintra frae Dunbar to Selcraig, and hae forgather'd wi' mony a guid fallow and monie a weelfar'd hizzie. I met wi' twa dink quines in particular, ane o' them a sonsie, fine, fodgel lass, baith braw and bonnie; the tither was a clean-shankit, straught, tight, weelfar'd winch, as blythe 's a lintwhite on a flowerie thorn, and as sweet and as modest 's a new blawn plumrose in a hazle shaw. They were baith bred to mainers by the beuk, and onie ane o' them had as muckle smeddum and rumblegumtion as the half o' some presbytries that you and I baith ken. They play'd me sik a deevil o' a shavie that I daur say if my harigals were turn'd out, ye wad see twa nicks i' the heart o' me like the mark o' a kail-whittle in a castock.

I was gaun to write you a lang pystle, but, Gude forgie me! I gat mysel sae notouriously bitchify'd the day, after kail-time, that I can hardly stoiter but and ben.

My best respecks to the guidwife and a' our commor friens, especiall Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank and the honest guidman o' Jock's Lodge.

I 'll be in Dumfries the morn gif the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale. Gude be wi' you, Willie! Amen! R. B.

No. LXXXVII.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH,§

AT MILLER AND SMITH'S OFFICE, LINLITHGOW.

MAUCHLINE, 11*th June*, 1787.

MY EVER DEAR SIR,

I DATE this from Mauchline, where I arrived on Friday even last. I slept at John Dow's, and called for my daughter; Mr. Hamilton and family; your mother, sister, and brother; my quondam Eliza, &c., all, all well. If any thing had been wanting to disgust me completely at Armour's family, their mean, servile compliance would have done it.

Give me a spirit like my favourite hero, Milton's Satan:

> "Hail, horrors! hail,
> Infernal world! and thou, profoundest hell,
> Receive thy new possessor! one who brings
> A mind not to be chang'd by *place* or *time!*"

I cannot settle to my mind. Farming, the only thing of which I know anything, and Heaven above knows, but little do I understand of that, I cannot, dare not risk on

* Mr. Peter Hill afterwards became a noted bookseller in Edinburgh, under whom Constable was brought up.

† Nicol was an enthusiastic admirer and a great *cronie* of the Poet. He died in 1797.

‡ This mare was the Poet's favourite, Jenny Geddes, named after the woman memorable in Scottish history as the first who displayed a *physical force opposition* to the introduction of episcopacy into Scotland, by flinging her stool at the dean of Edinburgh's head, in St. Giles' Church, July 23, 1637, when he commenced to read the Liturgy, exclaiming at the same time, "Villain! dost thou say the mass at my leg?"

§ To whom Burns addressed his famous "Epistle to James Smith."

farms as they are. If I do not fix, I will go for Jamaica. Should I stay in an unsettled state at home, I would only dissipate my little fortune, and ruin what I intend shall compensate my little ones, for the stigma I have brought on their names.

I shall write you more at length soon; as this letter costs you no postage, if it be worth reading you cannot complain of your penny-worth. I am ever, my dear Sir, yours, R. B.

P.S.—The cloot has unfortunately broke, but I have provided a fine buffalo-horn, on which I am going to affix the same cypher which you will remember was on the lid of the cloot.*

No. LXXXVIII.

TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th June*, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM now arrived safe in my native country, after a very agreeable jaunt, and have the pleasure to find all my friends well. I breakfasted with your grey-headed, reverend friend, Mr. Smith; and was highly pleased both with the cordial welcome he gave me, and his most excellent appearance and sterling good sense.

I have been with Mr. Miller at Dalswinton, and am to meet him again in August. From my view of the lands and his reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended; but still they are but slender.

I am quite charmed with Dumfries folks. Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife, gude forgie me! I had almost broke the tenth commandment on her account. Simplicity, elegance, good sense, sweetness of disposition, good humour, kind hospitality, are the constituents of her manner and heart; in short—but if I say one word more about her, I shall be directly in love with her.

I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of anything generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren (who perhaps formerly eyed me askance) since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, the intrepid, unyielding, independence, the desperate daring, and noble defiance of hardship, in that great personage, SATAN. 'Tis true, I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant, purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith—that noxious planet so baneful in its influences to the rhyming tribe—I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune dodges the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business; add to all, that thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop, "he falls, like Lucifer, never to hope again." God grant this may be an unreal picture with respect to me; but should it not, I have very little dependence on mankind. I will close my letter with this tribute my heart bids me pay you—the many ties of acquaintance and friendship which I have, or think I have, in life, I have felt along the lines, and, damn them, they are almost all of them of such frail contexture, that I am sure they would not stand the breath of the least adverse breeze of fortune; but from you, my ever dear Sir, I look with confidence for the apostolic love that shall wait on me "through good report and bad report"—the love which Solomon emphatically says "is strong as death." My compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and all the circle of our common friends.

R. B.

P.S.—I shall be in Edinburgh about the latter end of July.

No. LXXXIX.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE,† EDINBURGH.

ARROCHAR, NEAR CROCHAIRBAS, BY LOCH LONG,
June 28, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WRITE you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage, Dumbarton. I ought sooner to have answered your kind letter, but you know I am a man of many sins.‡

R. B.

* Referring to a snuff box made of a sheep's hoof.

† See LIFE. ‡ This letter refers to Burns' West Highland Tour

No. XC.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH, LINLITHGOW.

June 30, 1787.

. . . . . .

On our return, at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion, we fell in with a merry party, and danced till the ladies left us, at three in the morning. Our dancing was none of the French or English insipid formal movements; the ladies sung Scotch songs like angels, at intervals; then we flew at Bab at the Bowster, Tullochgorum, Loch Errochside,* &c., like midges sporting in the mottie sun, or craws prognosticating a storm in a hairst day. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes that we went out to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Benlomond. We all kneeled; our worthy landlord's son held the bowl; each man a full glass in his hand, and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense, like Thomas-a-Rhymer's prophecies I suppose. After a small refreshment of the gifts of Somnus, we proceeded to spend the day on Lochlomond, and reach Dumbarton in the evening. We dined at another good fellow's house, and consequently push'd the bottle: when we went out to mount our horses, we found ourselves "No verra fou but gaylie yet." My two friends and I rode soberly down the Loch side, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip and spur. My companions, though seemingly gayly mounted, fell sadly astern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, she strained past the Highlandman in spite of all his efforts with the hair halter: just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breekless a—e in a clipt hedge; and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny Geddes trod over me with such cautious reverence that matters were not so bad as might well have been expected; so I came off with a few cuts and bruises, and a thorough resolution to be a pattern of sobriety for the future.

I have yet fixed on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am, just as usual, a rhyming, mason-making, rattling, aimless, idle fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon. I was going to say a wife too; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of Parnassus, and like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry.

I am afraid I have almost ruined one source, the principal one, indeed, of my former happiness—that eternal propensity I always had to fall in love. My heart no more glows with feverish raptures, I have no paradisaical evening interviews, stolen from the restless cares and prying inhabitants of this weary world. I have only . . . . This last is one of your distant acquaintances, has a fine figure, and elegant manners; and, in the train of some great folks whom you know, has seen the politest quarters in Europe. I do like her a good deal; but what piques me is her conduct at the commencement of our acquaintance. I frequently visited her when I was in ————, and after passing regularly the intermediate degrees between the distant formal bow and the familiar grasp round the waist, I ventured, in my careless way, to talk of friendship in rather ambiguous terms; and after her return to ————, I wrote to her in the same style. Miss, construing my words farther than even I intended, flew off in a tangent of female dignity and reserve, like a mounting lark in an April morning; and wrote me an answer which measured me out very completely, what an immense way I had to travel before I could reach the climate of her favour. But I am an old hawk at the sport, and wrote her such a cool, deliberate, prudent reply, as brought my bird from her aerial towerings, pop, down at my foot, like Corporal Trim's hat.

As for the rest of my acts, and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes; they shall be recorded in a few weeks hence at Linlithgow, in the chronicles of your memory, by

R. B.

* Scotch tunes.

No. XCI.

TO MR. JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

Mossgiel, *7th July*, 1787.

My Dear Richmond,

I am all impatience to hear of your fate since the old confounder of right and wrong has turned you out of place, by his journey to answer his indictment at the bar of the other world. He will find the practice of the court so different from the practice in which he has for so many years been thoroughly hackneyed, that his friends, if he had any connections truly of that kind, which I rather doubt, may well tremble for his sake. His chicane, his left-handed wisdom, which stood so firmly by him to such good purpose here, like other accomplices in robbery and plunder, will, now the piratical business is blown, in

all probability turn king's evidence, and then the devil's bagpiper will touch him off "Bundle and go!"

If he has left you any legacy, I beg your pardon for all this; if not, I know you will swear to every word I said about him.

I have lately been rambling over by Dumbarton and Inverary, and running a drunken race on the side of Loch Lomond with a wild Highlandman: his horse, which had never known the ornaments of iron and leather, zigzagged across before my old spavin'd hunter, whose name is Jenny Geddes, and down came the Highlandman, horse and all, and down came Jenny and my bardship; so I have got such a skinful of bruises and wounds, that I shall be at least four weeks before I dare venture on my journey to Edinburgh.

Not one new thing under the sun has happened in Mauchline since you left it. I hope this will find you as comfortably situated as formerly, or, if Heaven pleases, more so; but, at all events, I trust you will let me know of course how matters stand with you, well or ill. 'Tis but poor consolation to tell the world when matters go wrong; but you know very well your connection and mine stands on a different footing. I am ever, my dear friend, yours, R. B.

No. XCII.

TO ROBERT AIKEN, Esq., AYR.

WITH COPY OF ELEGY FOR SIR JAMES HUNTER BLAIR.

MAUCHLINE, 14*th July*, 1787.

MY HONOURED FRIEND,

THE melancholy occasion of the foregoing poem affects not only individuals but a country. That I have lost a friend, is but repeating after Caledonia. This copy, rather an incorrect one, I beg you will accept, till I have an opportunity in person, which I expect to have on Tuesday first, of assuring you how sincerely I ever am, honoured Sir, your oft obliged, R. B.

MR. HAMILTON'S OFFICE
Saturday Evening.

No. XCIII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNR.

MAUCHLINE, 23*rd July*, 1787.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

THERE is one thing for which I set great store by you as a friend, and it is this—that I have not a friend upon earth, besides yourself, to whom I can talk nonsense without forfeiting some degree of his esteem. Now, to one like me, who never cares for speaking anything else but nonsense, such a friend as you is an invaluable treasure. I was never a rogue, but have been a fool all my life; and, in spite of all my endeavours, I see now plainly that I shall never be wise. Now it rejoices my heart to have met with such a fellow as you, who, though you are not just such a hopeless fool as I, yet I trust you will never listen so much to the temptations of the devil, as to grow so very wise that you will in the least disrespect an honest fellow because he is a fool. In short, I have set you down as the staff of my old age, when the whole list of my friends will, after a decent share of pity, have forgot me.

"Though in the morn come sturt and strife
Yet joy may come at noon;
And I hope to live a merry, merry life
When a' thir days are done."

Write me soon, were it but a few lines just to tell me how that good sagacious man, your father, is—that kind, dainty body your mother—that strapping chield your brother Douglas—and my friend Rachel,* who is as far before Rachel of old, as she was before her blear-eyed sister Leah.

R. B.

No. XCIV.

TO DR. MOORE.

MAUCHLINE, 2*nd August*, 1787.

SIR,

FOR some time past I have been rambling over the country, partly on account of some little business I have to settle in various places; but of late I have been confined with some lingering complaints, originating, as I take it, in the stomach. To divert my spirits a little in this miserable fog of *ennui*, I have taken a whim to give you a history of myself.

My name has made a small noise in the country; you have done me the honour to interest yourself very warmly in my behalf; and I think a faithful account of what character of a man I am, and how I came by that character, may perhaps amuse you in an idle moment. I will give you an honest narrative, though I know it will be at the expence of frequently being laugh'd at; for I assure you, Sir, I have, like Solomon, whose character, except in the trifling affair of Wisdom, I sometimes think I resemble—I have, I say, like him "turned my eyes to behold madness and folly," and like him, too frequently

* Rachel Ainslie, Robert Ainslie's sister.

shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship. In the very polite letter Miss Williams did me the honour to write me, she tells me you have got a complaint in your eyes. I pray God it may be removed; for, considering that lady and you are my common friends, you will probably employ her to read this letter, and then good-night to that esteem with which she was pleased to honour the Scotch Bard!

After you have perused these pages, should you think them trifling and impertinent, I only beg leave to tell you, that the poor author wrote them under some very twitching qualms of conscience, that, perhaps, he was doing what he ought not to do; a predicament he has more than once been in before.

I have not the most distant pretence to what the pye-coated guardians of Escutcheons call a Gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted at the Herald's Office; and, looking through the granary of honours, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me—

> "My ancient but ignoble blood,
> Has crept thro' scoundrels ever since the flood."

Gules, purpure, argent, &c., quite disowned me. My forefathers rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal, and had the honour to share their fate. I do not use the word "honour" with any reference to political principles: loyal and disloyal I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court known in this country by the name of "club-law." Those who dare welcome ruin and shake hands with infamy, for what they believe sincerely to be the cause of their God or their king, are—as Mark Antony in "Shakspeare" says of Brutus and Cassius—"honourable men." I mention this circumstance because it threw my father on the world at large; where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my pretensions to Wisdom. I have met with few who understood men, their manners and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son.

For the first six or seven years of my life my father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr. Had my father continued in that situation, I must have marched off to have been one of the little underlings about a farmhouse; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they could discern between good and evil; so, with the assistance of his generous master, he ventured on a small farm in that gentleman's estate. At these years, I was by no means a favourite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot-piety. I say "idiot-piety," because I was then but a child. Though I cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and against the years of ten or eleven, I was absolutely a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country, of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, enchanted towers, giants, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy, but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest thing of composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was "The Vision of Mirza," and a hymn of Addison's, beginning "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!" I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ears—

> "For though in dreadful whirls we hung
> High on the broken wave;"

I met with these pieces in Mason's English Collection, one of my school-books. The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read again, were "The Life of Hannibal," and "The History of Sir William Wallace." Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough that I might be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.

Polemical Divinity about this time was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining on Sundays, between sermons, in conversation parties, at funerals, &c., in a few years more, used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

My vicinity to Ayr was of great advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modification of spirited pride, like our Catechism's definition of Infinitude, was "without bounds or limits." I formed many connections with other younkers who possessed superior advantages; the youngling actors who were busy with the rehearsal of parts, in which they were shortly to appear on that stage where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at these green years that the young noblesse and gentry have a just sense of the

immense distance between them and their ragged playfellows. It takes a few dashes into the world, to give the young Great Man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who perhaps were born in the same village. My young superiors never insulted the clouterly appearance of my plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them, even then, I could pick up some observations, and one, whose heart I am sure not even the "Munny Begum's" scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors, as they dropped off for East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction; but I was soon called to more serious evils. My father's generous master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clench the curse, we fell into the hands of a factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of "The Twa Dogs."* My father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children, and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labour. My father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two years more, and to weather these, we retrenched expenses. We lived very poorly: I was a dexterous ploughman for my years, and the next eldest to me was a brother, who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at the threatening, insolent epistles from the scoundrel tyrant, which used to set us all in tears.

This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave—brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and a woman together as partners in the labours of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature who just counted an autumn less. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scotch idiom: she was a "bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass." In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me into a certain delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our chiefest pleasure here below. How she caught the contagion I can't say; you medical folks talk much of infection by breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly told her that I loved her. Indeed, I did not well know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan, when I looked and fingered over her hand to pick out the nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualifications, she sung sweetly; and 'twas her favourite Scotch reel that I attempted to give an embodied vehicle to in rhyme. I was not so presumptive as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he: for, excepting smearing sheep, and casting peats (his father living in the moors), he had no more scholar-craft than I had. Thus with me began love and poesy; which at times have been my only, and till within this last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment.

My father struggled on till he reached a freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money in his hand at the commencement, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a lawsuit between him and his landlord commencing, after three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from absorption in a jail by a phthisical consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stept in, and snatched him away to "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

It is during this climacteric that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish. No *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. My knowledge of ancient story was gathered from Guthrie's and Salmon's Geographical Grammar; my knowledge of modern manners, and of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator*. These, with Pope's Works, some Plays of Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, The Pantheon, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener, Boyle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Doctor Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, a Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had been the extent of my reading.† The collection of songs was my *vade mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart, or walking to labour, song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the tender or sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe much to this for my critic-craft, such as it is.

* See vol. i. p. 62.

† According to the recollection of Mrs. Begg, the poet's youngest sister, he possessed a copy of Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany*.

In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My father had an unaccountable antipathy against these meetings, and my going was, what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands. My father, as I said before, was the sport of strong passions; from that instance of rebellion he took a kind of dislike to me,* which, I believe, was one cause of that dissipation which marked my future years. I say dissipation, comparative with the strictness and sobriety of Presbyterian country life; for though the Will-O'-Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet, early ingrained piety and virtue never failed to point me out the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was never to have an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two doors by which I could enter the fields of fortune were —the most niggardly economy, or the little chicaning art of bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it: the last—I always hated the contamination of its threshold! Thus abandoned of view or aim in life, with a strong appetite for sociability (as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark), and a constitutional hypochondriac taint which made me fly solitude: add to all these incentives to social life—my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense, made me generally a welcome guest. So 'tis no great wonder that always, "where two or three were met together, there was I in the midst of them." But far beyond all the other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain.* My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some Goddess or other; and, like every warfare in this world, I was sometimes crowned with success, and sometimes mortified with defeat. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and set want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for any labours than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evening in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on an amour without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity in these matters which recommended me as a proper second in duels of that kind; and I dare say, I felt as much pleasure at being in the secret of half the amours in the parish, as ever did Premier at knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.

The very goose-feather in my hand seems instinctively to know the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song, and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the amours of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage: but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice baptize these things by the name of follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty they are matters of the most serious nature: to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious part of their enjoyments.

Another circumstance in my life which made very considerable alterations on my mind and manners was—I spent my seventeenth summer a good distance from home, at a noted school on a smuggling coast, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at this time very successful: scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were as yet new to me, and I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to look unconcernedly on a large tavern-bill, and mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand in my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom: a charming *Fillette,* who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off in a tangent from the spheres of my studies. I struggled on with my sines and co-sines for a few days more; but stepping out to the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, I met with my angel—

> "Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower ——."

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet with her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, I was innocent.

I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and Shenstone's Works: I had seen mankind in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three-farthings' worth of business in the world, yet every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a board plodding son of day-book and ledger.

My life flowed on much in the same tenor till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle,*

* He was anxious about his son, as he feared the contamination of his morals; but he did not dislike him.

were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and Mackenzie--"Tristram Shandy" and the "Man of Feeling"—were my bosom favourites.

Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but 'twas only the humour of the hour. I had usually half a dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed it as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once they were lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme; and then conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except "Winter, a dirge"* (the eldest of my printed pieces), "The Death and dying words of poor Mailie,"† "John Barleycorn,"‡ and Songs first, and second, and third. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school-business.

My twenty-third year was to me an important era. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined with a flax-dresser in a neighbouring country town, to learn his trade, and carry on the business of manufacturing and retailing flax. This turned out a sadly unlucky affair. My partner was a scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of thieving; and to finish the whole, while we were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year, our shop, by the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, took fire and burned to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth sixpence. I was obliged to give up business; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my father's head; the darkest of which was—he was visibly far gone in a consumption. To crown all, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the fields of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my hypochondriac complaint being irritated to such a degree, that for three months I was in a diseased state of body and mind, scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have just got their sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed!" &c.

From this adventure I learned something of a town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn was—I formed a bosom friendship with a young fellow, the *first* created being I had ever seen, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a plain mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view to bettering his situation in life. The patron dying, and leaving my friend unprovided for, just as he was ready to launch forth into the world, the poor fellow, in despair, went to sea; where, after a variety of good and bad fortune, he was, a little before I was acquainted with him, set a-shore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stript of everything. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this moment captain of a large West-Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

This gentleman's mind was fraught with courage, independence, and magnanimity, and every noble, manly virtue. I loved him, I admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and I strove to imitate him. I in some measure succeeded; I had the pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief, and the consequence was that soon after I resumed the plough, I wrote the enclosed "Welcome."§

My reading was only increased by two stray volumes of Pamela, and one of Ferdinand Count Fathom, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces which are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Fergusson's Scotch Poems, I strung anew my wildly-sounding, rustic lyre with emulating vigour. When my father died his all went among the rapacious hell-hounds that growl in the kennel of justice; but we made a shift to scrape a little money in the family amongst us, with which (to keep us together) my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hare-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

I entered on this farm with a full resolution "Come, go to, I will be wise!" I read farming books, I calculated crops, I attended markets, and in short, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying in bad seed; the second, from a late harvest, we lost half of both our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two Reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my "Holy Fair." I had an idea myself that the piece had some merits; but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of these things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain side of both clergy and laity, it met with a roar of applause.

* See vol. i. p. 8. † See vol. i. p. 13. ‡ See vol. i. p. 13.

§ See vol. i. p. 22.

"Holy Willie's Prayer" next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held three several meetings to look over their holy artillery, if any of it was pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my idle wanderings led me on another side, point-blank, within reach of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story alluded to in my printed poem, "The Lament." 'Twas a shocking affair, which I cannot yet bear to recollect, and it had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning, of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; as in truth it was only nominally mine (for stock I had none to embark in it), and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. Before leaving my native country, however, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as in my power; I thought they had merit; and 'twas a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver, or perhaps gone to the world of spirits, a victim to that inhospitable clime. I can truly say, that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and my works as I have at this moment. It was ever my opinion that the great, unhappy mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance or mistaken notions of themselves. To know myself had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself, alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design, where she seemed to have intended the various lights and shades in my character. I was pretty sure my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes would make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; besides pocketing (all expenses deducted) near twenty pounds. This last came very seasonably, as I was about to indent myself, for want of money to pay my freight. So soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the Torrid Zone, I bespoke a passage in the very first ship that was to sail, for

"Hungry ruin had me in the wind."

I had for some time been skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised, ungrateful people had uncoupled the merciless legal pack at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed a song, "The gloomy night is gathering fast," which was to be the last effort of my muse in Caledonia, when a letter from Dr. Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by rousing my poetic ambition. The Doctor belonged to a class of critics for whose applause I had not even dared to hope. His idea, that I would meet with every encouragement for a second edition, fired me so much that away I posted for Edinburgh without a single acquaintance in town, or a single letter of recommendation in my pocket. The baneful star that had so long presided in my Zenith, for once made a revolution to the Nadir; and the providential care of a good God placed me under the patronage of one of his noblest creatures, the Earl of Glencairn. "*Oubliez moi, grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie!*"

I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to "catch the manners living as they rise."

You can now, Sir, form a pretty near guess of what sort of a wight he is, whom for some time you have honoured with your correspondence. That whim and fancy, keen sensibility and riotous passions, may still make him zig-zag in his future path of life, is very probable; but, come what will, I shall answer for him—the most determinate integrity and honour. . . . . And though his evil star should again blaze in his meridian with tenfold more direful influence, he may reluctantly tax friendship with pity, but no more.

My most respectful compliments to Miss Williams. The very elegant and friendly letter she honoured me with a few days ago, I cannot answer at present, as my presence is required in Edinburgh for a week or so, and I set off to-morrow.

I enclose you "Holy Willie" for the sake of giving you a little further information of the affair than Mr. Creech could do. An Elegy I composed the other day on Sir James H. Blair, if time allow, I will transcribe. The merit is just mediocre.

If you will oblige me so highly and do me so much honour as now and then to drop me a line, please direct to me at Mauchline, Ayrshire. With the most grateful respect, I have the honour to be, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. B.

No. XCV.

TO MR. ARCHIBALD LAWRIE.

My Dear Sir, Edinburgh, 14*th August*, 1787.

Here am I—that is all I can tell you of that unaccountable being myself. What I am doing no mortal

can tell; what I am thinking I myself cannot tell; what I am usually saying is not worth telling. The clock is just striking one, two, three, four, —, —, —, —, —, —, —, twelve, forenoon; and here I sit in the attic story, *alias* the garret, with a friend on the right hand of my standish —a friend whose kindness I shall largely experience at the close of this line—there—thank you—a friend, my dear Mr. Lawrie, whose kindness often makes me blush; a friend who has more of the milk of human kindness than all the human race put together, and what is highly to his honour, peculiarly a friend to the friendless as often as they come in his way; in short, Sir, he is, without the least alloy, a universal philanthropist; and his much beloved name is—a bottle of good old Port! In a week, if whim and weather serve, I shall set out for the north—a tour to the Highlands.

I ate some Newhaven broth, in other words, boiled mussels, with Mr. Farquhar's family, t'other day. Now I see you prick up your ears. They are all well, and Mademoiselle is particularly well. She begs her respects to you all; along with which please present those of your humble servant. I can no more. I have so high a veneration, or rather idolatrization, for the cleric character, that even a little *futurum esse vel fuisse Priestling*, in his *Penna pennae pennae*, &c., throws an awe over my mind in his presence, and shortens my sentences into single ideas.

Farewell, and believe me to be ever, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. XCVI.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, JUNR.,

BERRYWELL, DUNSE.

EDINBURGH, 23*rd August*, 1787.

"As I gaed up to Dunse,
To warp a pickle yarn,
Robin, silly body,
He gat me wi' bairn."

FROM henceforth, my dear Sir, I am determined to set off with my letters like the periodical writers; viz., prefix a kind of text quoted from some Classic of undoubted authority, such as the author of the immortal piece, of which my text is a part. What I have to say on my text is exhausted in a letter I wrote you the other day, before I had the pleasure of receiving yours from Inverleithen; and sure never was anything more lucky, as I have but the time to write this, that Mr. Nicol on the opposite side of the table, takes to correct a proof-sheet of a thesis. They are gabbling Latin so loud that I cannot hear what my own soul is saying in my own scull, so must just give you a matter-of-fact sentence or two, and end, if time permit, with a verse *de rei generatione*.

To-morrow I leave Edinburgh in a chaise; Nicol thinks it more comfortable than horseback, to which I say, Amen; so Jenny Geddes goes home to Ayrshire, to use a phrase of my mother's, "wi' her finger in her mouth."

Now for a modest verse of classical authority:—

The cats like kitchen;
The dogs like broo;
The lasses like the lads weel,
And th' auld wives too.

Chorus—An' we 're a' noddin',
Nid, nid, noddin',
We 're a' noddin' fou at e'en.

If this does not please you, let me hear from you: if you write any time before the first of September, direct to Inverness, to be left at the Post Office till called for; the next week at Aberdeen, the next at Edinburgh. The sheet is done, and I shall just conclude with assuring you that I am, and ever with pride shall be, my dear Sir,

R. B.

Call your boy what you think proper, only interject Burns. What say you to a scripture name; for instance, Zimri Burns Ainslie, or Achitophel, &c., &c.; look your Bible for these two heroes. If you do this, I will repay the compliment.

No. XCVII.

TO ST. JAMES' LODGE, TARBOLTON.

EDINBURGH, 23*rd August*, 1787.

MEN AND BRETHREN.

I AM truly sorry it is not in my power to be at your quarterly meeting. If I must be absent in body, believe me I shall be present in spirit. I suppose those who owe us monies, by bill or otherwise, will appear—I mean those we summoned. If you please, I wish you would delay prosecuting defaulters till I come home. The court is up, and I will be home before it sits down. In the meantime, to take a note of who appear and who do not, of our faulty debtors, will be right in my humble

opinion; and those who confess debt and crave days, I think we should spare them. Farewell!

"Within your dear mansion may wayward Contention,
And withered Envy ne'er enter;
May Secrecy round be the mystical bound,
And Brotherly Love be the centre."

R. B.

To the Free Masons of St. James' Lodge,
Care of H. Manson, Tarbolton.

No. XCVIII.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

Stirling, 26*th August*, 1787.

My Dear Sir,

I intended to have written you from Edinburgh, and now write you from Stirling to make an excuse. Here am I, on my way to Inverness, with a truly original, but very worthy man, a Mr. Nicol, one of the masters of the High School in Edinburgh. I left Auld Reekie yesterday morning, and have passed, besides by-excursions, Linlithgow, Borrowstounness, Falkirk, and here am I undoubtedly. This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for Old Caledonia, over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich carse of Falkirk. The crops are very strong, but so very late, that there is no harvest, except a ridge or two perhaps in ten miles, all the way I have travelled from Edinburgh.

I left Andrew Bruce and family all well. I will be at least three weeks in making my tour, as I shall return by coast, and have many people to call for.

My best compliments to Charles our dear kinsman and fellow-saint; and Messrs. W. & H. Parkers. I hope Hughoc* is going on and prospering with God and Miss M'Causlin.

If I could think on any thing sprightly, I should let you hear every other post; but a dull, matter-of-fact business, like this scrawl, the less and seldomer one writes the better.

* The Hughoc who figured in "Poor Mallie."

Among other matters of fact I shall add this, that I am and ever shall be, my dear Sir,—Your obliged,

R. B.

No. XCIX.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq., MAUCHLINE.

Stirling, 28*th August*, 1787.

My Dear Sir,

Here am I on my way to Inverness. I have rambled over the rich fertile carses of Falkirk and Stirling, and am delighted with their appearance: richly waving crops of wheat, barley, &c., but no harvest at all yet, except, in one or two places, an old wife's ridge. Yesterday morning I rode from this town up the meandering Devon's banks to pay my respects to some Ayrshire folks at Harvieston. After breakfast we made a party to go and see the famous Caudron-linn, a remarkable cascade in the Devon, about five miles above Harvieston; and after spending one of the most pleasant days I ever had in my life, I returned to Stirling in the evening.† They are a family, Sir, though I had not had any prior tie—though they had not been the brothers and sisters of a certain generous friend of mine—I would never forget them. I am told you have not seen them these several years, so you can have very little idea of what these young folks are now. Your brother is as tall as you are, but slender rather than otherwise; and I have the satisfaction to inform you that he is getting the better of those consumptive symptoms which I suppose you know were threatening him. His make, and particularly his manner, resemble you, but he will have a still finer face. (I put in the word still to please Mrs. Hamilton). Good sense, modesty, and at the same time a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact, are striking features in his character; and, what

† Burns visited the Devon along with Dr. Adair (afterwards of Harrowgate) in August 1787. We quote Adair's narrative:—

"From Stirling we went through the romantic and fertile vale of Devon to Harvieston, then inhabited by Mrs. Hamilton, mother of Mr. Gavin Hamilton, the Poet's Mauchline patron, with the younger part of whose family Burns had been previously acquainted. He introduced me to the family, and there was formed my first acquaintance with Mrs. Hamilton's eldest daughter, to whom I have been married for nine years. Thus was I indebted to Burns for a connection from which I have derived, and expect farther to derive, much happiness. During a residence of about ten days at Harvieston, we made excursions to visit various parts of the surrounding scenery, inferior to none in Scotland in beauty, sublimity, and romantic interest; particularly Castle Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Caldron Linn; and the Rumbling Bridge, a single bread arch, thrown by the devil, if tradition is to be trusted, across the river, at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed."

with me is the Alpha and Omega, he has a heart that might adorn the breast of a poet! Grace has a good figure, and the look of health and cheerfulness, but nothing else remarkable in her person. I scarcely ever saw so striking a likeness as is between her and your little Beenie; the mouth and chin particularly. She is reserved at first; but as we grew better acquainted, I was delighted with the native frankness of her manner, and the sterling sense of her observation. Of Charlotte I cannot speak in common terms of admiration; she is not only beautiful but lovely. Her form is elegant; her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has happily recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress:—

"Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought."

Her eyes are fascinating; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind.

I do not give you all this account, my good Sir, to flatter you. I mean it to reproach you. Such relations the first peer in the realm might own with pride; then why do you not keep up more correspondence with these so amiable young folks? I had a thousand questions to answer about you. I had to describe the little ones with the minuteness of anatomy. They were highly delighted when I told them that John* was so good a boy, and so fine a scholar, and that Willie [Wilhelmina] was going on still very pretty; but I have it on commission to tell her from them that beauty is a poor silly bauble, without she be good. Miss Chalmers I had left in Edinburgh; but I had the pleasure of meeting with Mrs. Chalmers, only Lady Mackenzie being rather a little alarmingly ill of a sore throat somewhat marred our enjoyment.

I shall not be in Ayrshire for four weeks. My most respectful compliments to Mrs. Hamilton, Miss Kennedy, and Dr. Mackenzie. I shall probably write him from some stage or other. I am ever, Sir, yours most gratefully,

R. B.

No. C.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.

Inverness, *4th September*, 1787.

Dear Cousin,

I wrote you from Edinburgh that I intended being north. I shall be in Stonhive sometime on Monday the 10th inst., and I beg the favour of you to meet me there. I understand there is but one Inn at Stonhive, so you cannot miss me. As I am in the country I certainly shall see any of my father's relations that are any way near my road; but I do not even know their names, or where one of them lives, so I hope you will meet me and be my guide. Farewell! till I have the pleasure of meeting you. I am ever, dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. CI.

TO WILLIAM INGLIS, Esq., INVERNESS.

Ettles Hotel, *Tuesday Evening.*

Mr. Burns presents his most respectful compliments to Mr. Inglis—would have waited on him with the inclosed,† but is jaded to death with the fatigue of to-day's journey—won't leave Inverness till Thursday morning.

No. CII.

TO MR. WALKER, BLAIR OF ATHOLE.‡

Inverness, *5th December*, 1787.

My Dear Sir,

I have just time to write the foregoing, § and to tell you that it was (at least most part of it) the effusion of an half-hour I spent at Bruar. I do not mean it was extempore, for I have endeavoured to brush it up as well

* The "wee curlie Johnnie" mentioned in the Dedication to Gavin Hamilton.

† The inclosed was a letter of introduction to that gentleman (then Provost of Inverness) from the poet's friend, William Dunbar, Esq., W.S., "Colonel of the Crochallan Club," in the following terms:—"Dear Sir,—The gentleman by whom this will be delivered to you is Mr. Burns of Airshire, who goes on an excursion to the North, personally unacquainted, excepting in so far as his elegant and simple Poems may have caught your attention. To men of such liberal and disinterested feelings as I know the citizens of Inverness to be, little seemed necessary as recommendatory of the Bard of Nature. Yet I thought it unworthy of me to permit him to migrate without mentioning him to you as my friend, and consigning him to you for that civility which distinguishes you among all ranks of migrants. I offer my best respects to Mrs. Inglis, and am always, dear Sir, your most obedient servant. William Dunbar."

"Edinburgh, *24th August*, 1787."

‡ See Life.

§ This was 'The Humble Petition of Bruar Water."

as Mr. Nicol's chat and the jogging of the chaise would allow. It eases my heart a good deal, as rhyme is the coin with which a poet pays his debts of honour or gratitude. What I owe to the noble family of Athole, of the first kind, I shall ever proudly boast; what I owe of the last, so help me God in my hour of need! I shall never forget.

The "little angel-band!" I declare I prayed for them very sincerely to-day at the Fall of Fyers. I shall never forget the fine family piece I saw at Blair: the amiable, the truly noble Duchess, with her smiling little seraph in her lap, at the head of the table: the lovely "olive plants," as the Hebrew bard finely says, round the happy mother: the beautiful Mrs. Grahame; the lovely, sweet Miss Cathcart, &c. I wish I had the powers of Guido to do them justice! My Lord Duke's kind hospitality—markedly kind indeed. Mr. Graham of Fintray's charms of conversation: Sir W. Murray's friendship: in short, the recollection of all that polite, agreeable company, raises an honest glow in my bosom.

R. B.

No. CIII.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.

TOWNFIELD, *six o'clock morning.*

MY DEAR COUSIN,

MR. NICOL and Mr. Carnegie have taken some freak in their head, and have wakened me just now with the rattling of the chaise to carry me to meet them at Craigie to go on our journey some other road, and breakfast by the way. I must go, which makes me very sorry. I beg my kindest, best compliments to your wife and all the good friends I saw yesternight. Write me to Edinburgh in this week, with a direction for your nephew in Glasgow. Direct to me—care of Mr. Creech, Edinburgh. I am ever, my dear Cousin—Yours truly,

R. B.

No. CIV.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS, MOSSGIEL.

EDINBURGH, 17*th September*, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I ARRIVED here safe yesterday evening, after a tour of twenty-two days, and travelling near six hundred miles, windings included. My farthest stretch was about ten miles beyond Inverness. I went through the heart of the Highlands by Crieff, Taymouth, the famous seat of Lord Breadalbane, down the Tay, among cascades and Druidical circles of stones, to Dunkeld, a seat of the Duke of Athole; thence across Tay, and up one of his tributary streams to Blair of Athole, another of the Duke's seats, where I had the honour of spending nearly two days with his Grace and family; thence many miles through a wild country, among cliffs grey with eternal snows, and gloomy savage glens, till I crossed Spey and went down the stream through Strathspey, so famous in Scottish music; Badenoch, &c., till I reached Grant Castle, where I spent half a day with Sir James Grant and family; and then crossed the country for Fort-George, but called by the way at Cawdor, the ancient seat of Macbeth; there I saw the identical bed in which tradition says King Duncan was murdered; lastly, from Fort-George to Inverness.

I returned by the coast, through Nairn, Forres, and so on, to Aberdeen, thence to Stonehive, where James Burness, from Montrose, met me by appointment. I spent two days among our relations, and found our aunts, Jean and Isabel, still alive, and hale old women. John Caird, though born the same year with our father, walks as vigorously as I can: they have had several letters from his son in New York. William Brand is likewise a stout old fellow; but further particulars I delay till I see you, which will be in two or three weeks. The rest of my stages are not worth rehearsing; warm as I was from Ossian's country, where I had seen his very grave, what cared I for fishing-towns or fertile carses? I slept at the famous Brodie of Brodie's one night, and dined at Gordon Castle next day, with the Duke, Duchess, and family. I am thinking to cause my old mare to meet me, by means of John Ronald, at Glasgow; but you shall hear farther from me before I leave Edinburgh. My duty and many compliments from the north to my mother; and my brotherly compliments to the rest. I have been trying for a berth for William, but am not likely to be successful. Farewell.

R. B.

No. CV.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.

EDINBURGH, 19*th September*, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I SEND you, along with this, nine copies which you will transmit as marked on the blank leaves. The

one to Lord Gardenstone you will transmit as soon as possible. Your hints about young Hudson I shall carefully remember when I call for him.

Any thing you send me, direct to the care of Mr. Andrew Bruce, Merchant, Bridge Street, Edinburgh; but I am afraid that your kind offer of the dry fish will cost more than they are worth to carriers. My compliments to your wife and all friends, and excuse this brevity in—Yours ever,

R. B.

No. CVI.

TO PATRICK MILLER, Esq., DALSWINTON.

EDINBURGH, 28*th September*, 1787.

SIR,

I HAVE been on a tour through the Highlands, and arrived in town but the other day, so could not wait on you at Dalswinton about the latter end of August, as I had promised and intended.

Independent of any views of future connections, what I owe you for the past, as a friend and benefactor (when friends I had few, and benefactors I had none), strongly in my bosom prohibits the most distant instance of ungrateful disrespect. I am informed you do not come to town for a month still, and within that time I shall certainly wait on you, as by this time I suppose you will have settled your scheme with respect to your farms.

My journey through the Highlands was perfectly inspiring, and I hope I have laid in a good stock of new poetical ideas from it. I shall make no apology for sending you the enclosed;* it is a small but grateful tribute to the memory of our common countryman. I have the honour to be, with the most grateful sincerity, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

P.S.—I have added another poem, partly as it alludes to some folks nearly and dearly connected with Ayrshire, and partly as rhymes are the only coin in which the poor poet can pay his debts of gratitude. The lady alluded to is Miss Isabella M'Leod, aunt to the young Countess of Loudon.

As I am determined not to leave Edinburgh till I wind up my matters with Mr. Creech, which I am afraid will be a tedious business, should I unfortunately miss you at Dalswinton, perhaps your factor will be able to inform me of your intentions with respect to Elesland farm, which will save me a jaunt to Edinburgh again.

* The elegy on Sir James Hunter Blair.

There is something so suspicious in the profession of attachment from a little man to a great man, that I know not how to do justice to the grateful warmth of my heart, when I would say how truly I am interested in the welfare of your little troop of angels, and how much I have the honour to be again, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

No. CVII.

TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

OCHTERTYRE, *Monday*, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I FIND myself very comfortable here, neither oppressed by ceremony nor mortified by neglect. Lady Augusta is a most engaging woman, and very happy in her family, which makes one's outgoings and incomings very agreeable. I called at Mr. Ramsay's of Auchtertyre as I came up the country, and am so delighted with him, that I shall certainly accept of his invitation to spend a day or two with him as I return. I leave this place on Wednesday or Thursday.

Make my compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Cruikshank, and Mrs. Nicol, if she is returned. I am ever, dear Sir, your deeply indebted,

R. B.

No. CVIII.

MR. WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK, EDINBURGH.

OCHTERTYRE, *Monday*, 1787.

I HAVE nothing, my dear Sir, to write to you, but that I feel myself exceedingly comfortably situated in this good family—just notice enough to make me easy but not to embarrass me. I was storm-stayed two days at the foot of the Ochil Hills, with Mr. Tait of Harvieston and Mr. Johnston of Alva; but was so well pleased that I shall certainly spend a day on the banks of the Devon as I return. I leave this place, I suppose, on Wednesday, and shall devote a day to Mr. Ramsay of Auchtertyre near Stirling—a man to whose worth I cannot do justice. My respectful kind compliments to Mrs. Cruikshank, and my dear little Jeanie; and if you see Mr. Masterton, please remember me to him. I am ever, my dear Sir, &c.,

R. B.

CIX.

TO PATRICK MILLER, Esq., DALSWINTON.

EDINBURGH, 20*th October*, 1787.

SIR,

I WAS spending a few days at Sir William Murray's, Ochtertyre, and did not get your obliging letter till to-day I came to town. I was still more unlucky in catching a miserable cold, for which the medical gentlemen have ordered me into close confinement, "under pain of death"—the severest of penalties. In two or three days, if I get better, and if I hear at your lodgings that you are still at Dalswinton, I will take a ride to Dumfries directly. From something in your last, I would wish to explain my idea of being your tenant. I want to be a farmer in a small farm, about a plough-gang, in a pleasant country, under the auspices of a good landlord. I have no foolish notion of being a tenant on easier terms than another. To find a farm where one can live at all is not easy—I only mean living soberly, like an old-style farmer, and joining personal industry. The banks of the Nith are as sweet poetic ground as any I ever saw; and besides, Sir, 'tis but justice to the feelings of my own heart, and the opinion of my best friends, to say that I would wish to call you landlord sooner than any landed gentleman I know. These are my views and wishes; and in whatever way you think best to lay out your farms, I shall be happy to rent one of them. I shall certainly be able to ride to Dalswinton about the middle of next week, if I hear that you are not gone. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

CX.

TO JAMES HOY, Esq., GORDON CASTLE.*

EDINBURGH, 20*th October*, 1787.

SIR,

I WILL defend my conduct in giving you this trouble, on the best of Christian principles—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." I shall certainly, among my legacies, leave my latest curse to that unlucky predicament which hurried—tore me away from Castle Gordon. May that obstinate son of Latin prose be curst to Scotch-mile periods, and damned to seven-league paragraphs; while Declension and Conjugation, Gender, Number, and Tense, under the ragged banners of Dissonance and Disarrangement, eternally rank against him in hostile array.

Allow me, Sir, to strengthen the small claim I have to your acquaintance, by the following request. An engraver, James Johnson, in Edinburgh, has, not from mercenary views, but from an honest Scotch enthusiasm, set about collecting all our native songs and setting them to music; particularly those that have never been set before. Clarke, the well-known musician, presides over the musical arrangement, and Drs. Beattie and Blacklock, Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, and your humble servant to the utmost of his small power, assist in collecting the old poetry, or sometimes for a fine air make a stanza, when it has no words. The brats (too tedious to mention) which claim a parental pang from my bardship, I suppose will appear in Johnson's second number—the first was published before my acquaintance with him. My request is—"Cauld Kail in Aberdeen" is one intended for this number, and I beg a copy of his Grace of Gordon's words to it, which you were so kind as to repeat to me. You may be sure we won't prefix the author's name, except you like, though I look on it as no small merit to this work that the names of so many of the authors of our old Scotch songs, names almost forgotten, will be inserted. I do not well know where to write to you—I rather write at you: but if you will be so obliging, immediately on receipt of this, as to write me a few lines I shall perhaps pay you in kind, though not in quality. Johnson's terms are:—each number a handsome pocket volume, to consist of a hundred Scotch songs, with basses for the harpsichord, &c. The price to subscribers, 5*s.*; to non-subscribers, 6*s.* He will have three numbers, I conjecture.

My direction, for two or three weeks, will be at Mr. William Cruikshank's, St. James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh. I am, Sir, yours to command,

R. B.

* James Hoy, librarian to the Duke of Gordon, a man of great learning and simplicity of character, a kind of Dominie Sampson.

No. CXI.

TO REV. JOHN SKINNER.†

EDINBURGH, *October* 25, 1787.

REVEREND AND VENERABLE SIR,

ACCEPT, in plain dull prose, my most sincere thanks for the best poetical compliment I ever received. I assure you, Sir, as a poet, you have conjured up an airy demon of vanity in my fancy, which the best abilities

† See LIFE.

in your other capacity would be ill able to lay. I regret, and while I live I shall regret, that when I was in the north, I had not the pleasure of paying a younger brother's dutiful respects to the author of the best Scotch song ever Scotland saw—"Tullochgorum 's my delight!" The world may think slightingly of the craft of song-making if they please, but, as Job says, "O that mine adversary had written a book!"—let them try. There is a certain something in the old Scotch songs, a wild happiness of thought and expression, which peculiarly marks them not only from English songs, but also from the modern efforts of song-wrights, in our native manner and language. The only remains of this enchantment, these spells of the imagination, rest with you. Our true brother, Ross of Lochlee, was likewise "owre cannie"—"a wild warlock"—but now he sings among the "sons of the morning."

I have often wished, and will certainly endeavour to form a kind of common acquaintance among all the genuine sons of Caledonian song. The world, busy in low prosaic pursuits, may overlook most of us; but "reverence thyself." The world is not our *peers*, so we challenge the jury. We can lash that world, and find ourselves a very great source of amusement and happiness independent of that world.

There is a work going on in Edinburgh just now which claims your best assistance. An engraver in this town has set about collecting and publishing all the Scotch songs, with the music, that can be found. Songs in the English language, if by Scotchmen, are admitted, but the music must all be Scotch. Drs. Beattie and Blacklock are lending a hand, and the first musician in the town presides over that department. I have been absolutely crazed about it, collecting old stanzas, and every information remaining respecting their origin, authors, &c., &c. This last is but a very fragment-business; but at the end of his second number—the first is already published—a small account will be given of the authors, particularly to preserve those of later times. Your three songs "Tullochgorum," "John of Badenyon," and "Ewie wi' the Crookit Horn," go into this second number. I was determined, before I got your letter, to write you, begging that you would let me know where the editions of these pieces may be found, as you would wish them to continue in future times; and if you be so kind to this undertaking as send any songs, of your own or others, that you would think proper to publish, your name will be inserted among the other authors—"Nill ye, will ye." One half of Scotland already give your songs to other authors. Paper is done. I beg to hear from you; the sooner the better, as I leave Edinburgh in a fortnight or three weeks. I am, with the warmest sincerity, Sir, your obliged humble servant,*

R. B.

* Mr. Skinner answered the above, November 14, 1787.

No. CXII.

TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.†

EDINBURGH, *October* 26, 1787.

I SEND Charlotte the first number of the songs; I would not wait for the second number; I hate delays in little marks of friendship, as I hate dissimulation in the language of the heart. I am determined to pay Charlotte a poetic compliment, if I could hit on some glorious old Scotch air, in number second.‡ You will see a small attempt on a shred of paper in the book; but though Dr. Blacklock commended it very highly, I am not just satisfied with it myself. I intend to make it description of some kind: the whining cant of love, except in real passion, and by a masterly hand, is to me as insufferable as the preaching cant of old Father Smeaton, Whig-minister at Kilmaurs. Darts, flames, cupids, loves, graces, and all that farrago, are just a Mauchline sacrament—a senseless rabble.

I got an excellent poetic epistle yesternight from the old, venerable author of Tullochgorum, John of Badenyon, &c. I suppose you know he is a clergyman. It is by far the finest poetic compliment I ever got. I will send you a copy of it.

I go on Thursday or Friday to Dumfries to wait on Mr. Miller about his farms. Do tell that to Lady Mackenzie, that she may give me credit for a little wisdom. "I Wisdom dwell with Prudence." What a blessed fire-side! How happy should I be to pass a winter evening under their venerable roof! and smoke a pipe of tobacco, or drink water-gruel with them! What solemn, lengthened, laughter-quashing gravity of phiz! What sage remarks on the good-for-nothing sons and daughters of indiscretion and folly! And what frugal lessons, as we straitened the fire-side circle, on the uses of the poker and tongs!

Miss Nimmo is very well, and begs to be remembered in the old way to you. I used all my eloquence, all the persuasive flourishes of the hand, and heart-melting modulation of periods in my power, to urge her out to Harvieston, but all in vain. My rhetoric seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind. I have seen the day—but that is a "tale of other years." In my conscience I believe that my heart has been so oft on fire that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night. I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the wild but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and—wish them good night. I mean this with respect to a

† Afterwards Mrs. Lewis Hay.
‡ Of the "Museum."

certain passion *dont j'ai eu l'honneur d'être un miserable esclave:* as for friendship, you and Charlotte have given me pleasure, permanent pleasure, "which the world cannot give, nor take away," I hope; and which will outlast the heavens and the earth.*

R. B.

CXIII.

TO MR. JAMES CANDLISH, GLASGOW.

EDINBURGH, *November*, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IF once I were gone from this scene of hurry and dissipation, I promise myself the pleasure of that correspondence being renewed which has been so long broken. At present I have time for nothing. Dissipation and business engross every moment. I am engaged in assisting an honest Scotch enthusiast, a friend of mine, who is an engraver, and has taken it into his head to publish a collection of all our songs set to music, of which the words and music are done by Scotsmen. This, you will easily guess, is an undertaking exactly to my taste. I have collected, begged, borrowed, and stolen, all the songs I could meet with. "Pompey's Ghost," words and music, I beg from you immediately, to go into his second number: the first is already published. I shall shew you the first number when I see you in Glasgow, which will be in a fortnight or less. Do be so kind as to send me the song in a day or two: you cannot imagine how much it will oblige me.

Direct to me at Mr. W. Cruikshank's, St. James's Square, New Town, Edinburgh.

R. B.

No. CXIV.

TO JAMES HOY, Esq., GORDON CASTLE.

EDINBURGH, *6th November*, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I WOULD have wrote you immediately on receipt of your kind letter, but a mixed impulse of gratitude and esteem whispered to me that I ought to send you something by way of return. When a poet owes anything, particularly when he is indebted for good offices, the payment that usually recurs to him—the only coin indeed in which he probably is conversant—is rhyme. Johnson sends the books by the fly, as directed, and begs me to enclose his most grateful thanks: my return I intended should have been one or two poetic bagatelles which the world have not seen, or perhaps, for obvious reasons, cannot see. These I shall send you before I leave Edinburgh. They may make you laugh a little, which, on the whole, is no bad way of spending one's precious hours and still more precious breath: at any rate, they will be, though a small, yet a very sincere mark of my respectful esteem for a gentleman whose further acquaintance I should look upon as a peculiar obligation.

The Duke's song, independent totally of his dukeship, charms me.† There is I know not what of wild happiness of thonght and expression peculiarly beautiful in the old Scottish song style, of which his Grace, old venerable Skinner, the author of "Tullochgorum," &c., and the late Ross, at Lochlee, of true Scottish poetic memory, are the only modern instances that I recollect, since Ramsay with his contemporaries, and poor Bob Fergusson went to the world of deathless existence and truly immortal song. The mob of mankind, that many-headed beast, would laugh at so serious a speech about an old song; but, as Job says, "O that mine adversary had written a book!" Those who think that composing a Scotch song is a trifling business—let them try it.

I wish my Lord Duke would pay a proper attention to the Christian admonition—"Hide not your candle under a bushel," but "let your light shine before men." I could name half a dozen dukes that I guess are a devilish deal worse employed: nay, I question if there are half a dozen better: perhaps there are not half that scanty number whom Heaven has favoured with the tuneful, happy, and, I will say, glorious gift. I am, dear Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXV.

TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

EDINBURGH, *6th November*, 1787.

MY DEAR MADAM,

I JUST now have read yours. The poetic compliments I pay cannot be misunderstood. They are

* Mrs. Adair (Charlotte Hamilton) burnt most of the letters to Margaret Chalmers; only a few portions remain.

† Alexander, fourth Duke of Gordon, wrote words to "Cauld Kail in Aberdeen," a copy of which Burns got from Hoy and inserted in the first vol. of the "Museum."

neither of them so particular as to point you out to the world at large; and the circle of your acquaintances will allow all I have said. Besides, I have complimented you chiefly, almost solely, on your mental charms. Shall I be plain with you? I will; so look to it. Personal attractions, Madam, you have much above par; wit, understanding, and worth, you possess in the first class. This is a cursed flat way of telling you these truths, but let me hear no more of your sheepish timidity. I know the world a little. I know what they will say of my poems (by second sight, I suppose, for I am seldom out in my conjectures); and you may believe me, my dear Madam, I would not run any risk of hurting you by an ill-judged compliment. I wish to show to the world the odds between a poet's friends and those of simple prosemen. More for your information, both the pieces go in. One of them, "Where braving angry winter's storms," is already set—the tune is Neil Gow's lamentation for Abercarny; the other is to be set to an old Highland air in Daniel Dow's "Collection of ancient Scotch music;" the name is *Ha a Chaillich air mo Dheidh.* My treacherous memory has forgot every circumstance about *Les Incas*, only I think you mentioned them as being in Creech's possession. I shall ask him about it. I am afraid the song of "Somebody" will come too late—as I shall, for certain, leave town in a week for Ayrshire, and from that to Dumfries, but there my hopes are slender. I leave my direction in town, so any thing, wherever I am, will reach me.

I saw your's to ———; it is not too severe, nor did he take it amiss. On the contrary, like a whipt spaniel he talks of being with you in the Christmas days. Mr. Tait has given him the invitation, and he is determined to accept of it. O selfishness! he owns in his sober moments, that from his own volatility of inclination, the circumstances in which he is situated, and his knowledge of his father's disposition, the whole affair is chimerical—yet he *will* gratify an idle *penchant* at the enormous, cruel expense of perhaps ruining the peace of the very woman for whom he professes the generous passion of love! He is a gentleman in his mind and manners—*tant pis!* He is a volatile school-boy: the heir of a man's fortune who well knows the value of two times two!

Perdition seize them and their fortunes, before they should make the amiable, the lovely ——— the derided object of their purse-proud contempt.

I am doubly happy to hear of Mrs. ———'s recovery, because I really thought all was over with her. There are days of pleasure yet awaiting her.

> "As I cam in by Glenap;
> I met with an aged woman;
> She bade me cheer up my heart,
> For the best o' my days was comin'." *

* See LIFE.

This day will decide my affairs with Creech. Things are, like myself, not what they ought to be; yet better than what they appear to be.

> "Heaven's Sovereign saves all beings but himself—
> That hideous sight—a naked human heart."

Farewell! remember me to Charlotte.

R. B.

No. CXVI.

TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

EDINBURGH, 1787.

I HAVE been at Dumfries, and at one visit more shall be decided about a farm in that country. I am rather hopeless in it; but as my brother is an excellent farmer, and is, besides, an exceedingly prudent, sober man (qualities which are only a younger brother's fortune in our family), I am determined, if my Dumfries business fail me, to return into partnership with him, and at our leisure take another farm in the neighbourhood. I assure you I look for high compliments from you and Charlotte on this very sage instance of my unfathomable, incomprehensible wisdom. Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment, now completed.† The air is admirable: true old Highland. It was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sung me when I was there; and I was so charmed with it that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing; for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number; so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first-rate; though I am convinced it is very well; and, what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only sincere, but just.

R. B.

No. CXVII.

TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

EDINBURGH, *November* 21, 1787.

I HAVE one vexatious fault to the kindly-welcome, well-filled sheet which I owe to your and Charlotte's‡ goodness

† See "The Banks of the Devon," vol. i. p. 132.
‡ Charlotte Hamilton.

—it contains too much sense, sentiment, and good-spelling. It is impossible that even you two, whom I declare to my God I will give credit for any degree of excellence the sex are capable of attaining, it is impossible you can go on to correspond at that rate; so like those who, Shenstone says, retire because they have made a good speech, I shall, after a few letters, hear no more of you. I insist that you shall write whatever comes first: what you see, what you read, what you hear, what you admire, what you dislike, trifles, bagatelles, nonsense; or to fill up a corner, e'en put down a laugh at full length. Now none of your polite hints about flattery: I leave that to your lovers, if you have or shall have any; though, thank heaven, I have found at last two girls who can be luxuriantly happy in their own minds and with one another, without that commonly necessary appendage to female bliss—A LOVER.

Charlotte and you are just two favourite resting-places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world—Gods knows I am ill-fitted for the struggle: I glory in being a Poet, and I want to be thought a wise man—I would fondly be generous, and I wish to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. "Some folk hae a hantle o' fauts, an' I'm but a ne'er-do-weel."

Afternoon.—To close the melancholy reflections at the end of last sheet, I shall just add a piece of devotion commonly known in Carrick by the title of the "Wabster's grace:"

"Some say we're thieves, and e'en sae are we!
Some say we lie, and e'en sae do we!
Gude forgi'e us, and I hope sae will He!
Up and to your looms, lads."

R. B.

No. CXVIII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, ST. JAMES' SQUARE.

SUNDAY MORNING, *November* 25, 1787.

I BEG, my dear Sir, you will not make any appointment to take us to Mr. Ainslie's to-night. On looking over my engagements, constitution, present state of my health, some little vexatious soul concerns, &c., I find I can't sup abroad to-night. I shall be in to-day till one o'clock, if you have a leisure hour.

You will think it romantic when I tell you, that I find the idea of your friendship almost necessary to my existence. You assume a proper length of face in my bitter hours of blue-devilism, and you laugh fully up to my highest wishes at my good things. I don't know, upon the whole, if you are one of the first fellows in God's world, but you are so to me. I tell you this just now, in the conviction that some inequalities in my temper and manner may perhaps sometimes make you suspect that I am not so warmly as I ought to be your friend,

R. B.

No. CXIX.

TO MISS MABANE, EDINBURGH.

No. 2 ST. JAMES' SQUARE, NEW TOWN, EDINBURGH, *Saturday Noon.*

HERE have I sat, my dear Madam, in the stony attitude of perplexed study for fifteen vexatious minutes, my head askew, bending over the intended card, my fixed eye insensible to the very light of day poured around; my pendulous goose-feather, loaded with ink, hanging over the future letter; all for the important purpose of writing a complimentary card to accompany your trinket.

Compliment is such a miserable Greenland expression, and lies at such a chilly polar distance from the torrid zone of my constitution that I cannot, for the very soul of me, use it to any person for whom I have the twentieth part of the esteem every one must have for you who knows you.

As I leave town in three or four days, I can give myself the pleasure of calling on you only for a minute. Tuesday evening, sometime about seven or after, I shall wait on you for your farewell commands.

The hinge of your box I put into the hands of the proper connoisseur. The broken glass likewise went under review; but deliberative wisdom thought it would too much endanger the whole fabric. I am, dear Madam, with all sincerity of enthusiasm, your very obedient servant,

R. B.

No. CXX.

TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

EDINBURGH, *December* 12, 1787.

I AM here under the care of a surgeon, with a bruised limb extended on a cushion; and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a mi·hnight thunder-

storm. A drunken coachman was the cause of the first, and incomparably the lightest evil; misfortune, bodily constitution, hell, and myself, have formed a "Quadruple Alliance" to guarantee the other. I got my fall on Saturday (December 8), and am getting slowly better.

I have taken tooth and nail to the Bible, and am got through the five books of Moses, and half way in Joshua. It is really a glorious book. I sent for my book-binder to-day, and ordered him to get me an octavo Bible in sheets, the best paper and print in town; and bind it with all the elegance of his craft.

I would give my best song to my worst enemy, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit.

I enclose you a proof copy of the "Banks of the Devon,"* which present with my best wishes to Charlotte. The "Ochil-hills"† you shall probably have next week for yourself. None of your fine speeches!

R. B.

No. CXXI.

TO MR. FRANCIS HOWDEN,

JEWELLER, PARLIAMENT SQUARE.

St. James' Square, *No.* 2, *Attic Storey.*

The bearer of this will deliver you a small shade to set; which, my dear Sir, if you would highly oblige a poor cripple devil as I am at present, you will finish at furthest against to-morrow evening. It goes a hundred miles into the country; and if it is at me by five o'clock to-morrow evening, I have an opportunity of a private hand to convey it; if not, I don't know how to get it sent. Set it just as you did the others you did for me—"in the neatest and cheapest manner;" both to answer as a breast-pin, and with a ring to answer as a locket. Do despatch it; as it is, I believe, the pledge of love, and perhaps the prelude to ma-tri-mo-ny. Everybody knows the auld wife's observation when she saw a poor dog going to be hanged—"God help us! it 's the gate we ha'e a' to gang!"

The parties, one of them at least, is a very particular acquaintance of mine—the honest lover. He only needs a little of an advice which my grandmother, rest her soul, often gave me, and I as often neglected—

"Leuk twice or ye loup ance."

* See vol. i. p. 132.

† See the Song (vol. i. p. 130) beginning—

"Where braving angry winter's storms."

Let me conjure you, my friend, by the bended bow of Cupid—by the unloosed cestus of Venus—by the lighted torch of Hymen—that you will have the locket finished by the time mentioned! And if your worship would have as much Christian charity as call with it yourself, and comfort a poor wretch, not wounded indeed by Cupid's arrow, but bruised by a good, serious, agonizing, damned, hard knock on the knee, you will gain the earnest prayers, when he does pray, of, dear Sir, your humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXXII.

TO CHARLES HAY, Esq., ADVOCATE.‡

Sir,

The enclosed poem § was written in consequence of your suggestion, last time I had the pleasure of seeing you. It cost me an hour or two of next morning's sleep, but did not please me; so it lay by, an ill-digested effort, till the other day that I gave it a critic brush. These kind of subjects are much hackneyed; and, besides, the wailings of the rhyming tribe over the ashes of the great are cursedly suspicious, and out of all character for sincerity. These ideas damped my Muse's fire; however, I have done the best I could, and, at all events, it gives me an opportunity of declaring that I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXXIII.

TO MISS CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

Edinburgh, *December* 19, 1787.

I begin this letter in answer to yours of the 17th current, which is not yet cold since I read it. The atmosphere of my soul is vastly clearer than when I wrote you last. For the first time, yesterday I crossed the room on crutches. It would do your heart good to see my bardship, not on my poetic, but on my oaken stilts; throwing my best leg with an air! and with as much hilarity in my gait and countenance, as a May frog leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long expected shower!

‡ Mr. Hay was a member of the "Crochallan Fencibles Club." He had been an advocate, and was raised to the bench as Lord Newton. He was able, upright, and convivial. He died at Powrie, Forfarshire, in 1811.

§ See Elegy on the death of Lord President Dundas, vol. i. p. 133.

I can't say I am altogether at my ease when I see anywhere in my path that meagre, squalid, famine-faced spectre—Poverty—attended as he always is by iron-fisted Oppression, and leering Contempt; but I have sturdily withstood his buffetings many a hard-laboured day already, and still my motto is—I DARE! My worst enemy is *moi même*. I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice, and passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and forethought move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and, alas! frequent defeat. There are just two creatures I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe. The one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear.

R. B.

No. CXXIV.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN,* IRVINE.

EDINBURGH, 30*th December*, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE met with few things in life which have given me more pleasure than Fortune's kindness to you since those days in which we met in the vale of misery; as I can honestly say that I never knew a man who more truly deserved it, or to whom my heart more truly wished it. I have been much indebted since that time to your story and sentiments for steeling my mind against evils, of which I have had a pretty decent share. My Will-o'-wisp fate you know: do you recollect a Sunday we spent together in Eglinton Woods? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived that idea of my own pieces which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet. I am happy to hear that you will be two or three months at home. As soon as a bruised limb will permit me I shall return to Ayrshire, and we shall meet; "and faith, I hope we 'll not sit dumb, nor yet cast out!"

I have much to tell you "of men, their manners, and their ways;" perhaps a little of the other sex. *Apropos*, I beg to be remembered to Mrs. Brown. There, I doubt not, my dear friend, but you have found substantial happiness. I expect to find you something of an altered, but not a different man; the wild, bold, generous young fellow, composed into the steady affectionate husband, and the fond, careful parent. For me, I am just the same will-o'-wisp being I used to be. About the first and fourth quarters of the moon, I generally set in for the trade-wind of wisdom; but about the full and change, I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes, which blow me into Chaos. Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom; and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow, who has wit and wisdom more murderously fatal than the assassinating stiletto of the Sicilian bandit, or the poisoned arrow of the savage African. My highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command, in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the following verses which she sent me the other day.† My best compliment to my friend, Allan.—Adieu!

R. B.

* See LIFE. Brown died in Greenock, much respected.

No. CXXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, *January* 21, 1788.

. . . . AFTER six weeks' confinement, I am beginning to walk across the room. They have been six horrible weeks; anguish and low spirits made me unfit to read, write, or think.

I have a hundred times wished that one could resign life as an officer resigns his commission, for I would not take in any poor ignorant wretch by selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny private, and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march on the campaign, a starving cadet—a little more conspicuously wretched.

I am ashamed of all this; for though I do want bravery for the welfare of life, I could wish, like some other soldiers, to have as much fortitude or cunning as to dissemble or conceal my cowardice.

As soon as I can bear the journey, which will be, I suppose, about the middle of next week, I leave Edinburgh; and soon after I shall pay my grateful duty at Dunlop House.

R. B.

† "Talk not of love it gives me pain." See Letters to Clarinda.

No. CXXVI.

TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

January, 1788.

Now for that wayward, unfortunate thing, *myself*. I have broke measures with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty, keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me upon his honour that I shall have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor, damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonizing sensibility, and bedlam passions!

"I wish that I were dead, but I 'm no like to die!" I had lately "a hairbreadth 'scape in the imminent deadly breach," of love too. Thank my stars, I got off heart-whole, "waur fleyed than hurt."—Interruption.

I have this moment got a hint. . . . I fear I am something like—undone; but I hope the best. Come stubborn Pride and unshrinking Resolution, accompany me through this, to me, miserable world! You must not desert me. Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching Regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn-hope. Seriously though, life presents me with but a melancholy path: but—my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on.

R. B.

No. CXXVII.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

Edinburgh, 1788.

I know your Lordship will disapprove of my ideas in a request I am going to make to you; but I have weighed, long and seriously weighed, my situation, my hopes, and turn of mind, and am fully fixed to my scheme if I can possibly effectuate it. I wish to get into the Excise: I am told that your Lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the Commissioners; and your Lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, embolden me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. There, my Lord, you have bound me over to the highest gratitude.

My brother's farm is but a wretched lease, but I think he will probably weather out the remaining seven years of it; and after the assistance which I have given and will give him, to keep the family together, I think, by my guess, I shall have rather better than two hundred pounds; and instead of seeking, what is almost impossible at present to find, a farm that I can certainly live by, with so small a stock, I shall lodge this sum in a banking-house, a sacred deposit, excepting only the calls of uncommon distress or necessitous old age. . . . .

These, my Lord, are my views: I have resolved from the maturest deliberation; and now I am fixed, I shall leave no stone unturned to carry my resolve into execution. Your Lordship's patronage is the strength of my hopes; nor have I yet applied to anybody else. Indeed, my heart sinks within me at the idea of applying to any other of the Great who have honoured me with their countenance. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial: but to your Lordship I have not only the honour, the comfort, but the pleasure of being—Your Lordship's much obliged and deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXXVIII.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq., OF FINTRY.

Edinburgh, 1788.

Sir,

When I had the honour of being introduced to you at Athole-house, I did not think so soon of asking a favour of you. When Lear, in Shakspeare, asked Old Kent why he wished to be in his service, he answers, "Because you have that in your face which I would fain call master." For some such reason, Sir, do I now solicit your patronage. You know, I dare say, of an application I lately made to your Board to be admitted an officer of Excise. I have, according to form, been examined by a supervisor, and to-day I give in his certificate, with a request for an order for instructions. In this affair, if I succeed, I am afraid I shall but too much need a patronizing friend. Propriety of conduct as a man, and fidelity and attention as an officer, I dare engage for; but with any thing like business, except manual labour, I am totally unacquainted. . . . .

I had intended to have closed my late appearance on the stage of life, in the character of a country farmer; but after discharging some filial and fraternal claims, I find I could only fight for existence in that miserable manner, which I have lived to see throw a venerable parent into the jaws of a jail, whence death, the poor man's last and often best friend, rescued him.

I know, Sir, that to need your goodness is to have a claim on it; may I, therefore, beg your patronage to forward me in this affair, till I be appointed to a division; where, by the help of rigid economy, I will try to support that independence so dear to my soul, but which has been too often so distant from my situation.

R. B.

No. CXXIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

EDINBURGH, 12*th February*, 1788.

SOME things in your late letters hurt me; not that *you say them*, but that *you mistake me*. Religion, my honoured Madam, has not only been all my life my chief dependence, but my dearest enjoyment. I have indeed been the luckless victim of wayward follies; but, alas! I have ever been "more fool than knave." A mathematician without religion is a probable character; an irreligious poet is a monster. . . . .

R. B.

No. CXXX.

TO THE REV. JOHN SKINNER.

EDINBURGH, *February* 14, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been a cripple now near three months, though I am getting vastly better, and have been very much hurried besides, or else I would have wrote you sooner. I must beg your pardon for the epistle you sent me appearing in the Magazine. I had given a copy or two to some of my intimate friends, but did not know of the printing of it till the publication of the Magazine. However, as it does great honour to us both, you will forgive it.

The second volume of the songs I mentioned to you in my last is published to-day. I send you a copy, which I beg you will accept as a mark of the veneration I have long had, and shall ever have, for your character, and of the claim I make to your continued acquaintance. Your songs appear in the third volume, with your name in the index; as I assure you, Sir, I have heard your "Tullochgorum," particularly among our west country-folks, given to many different names, and most commonly to the immortal author of "The Minstrel," who, indeed, never wrote anything superior to "Gie 's a sang, Montgomery cried." Your brother has promised me your verses to the Marquis of Huntly's reel, which certainly deserve a place in the collection. My kind host, Mr. Cruikshank, of the High School here, and said to be one of the best Latins in this age, begs me to make you his grateful acknowledgments for the entertainment he has got in a Latin publication of yours, that I borrowed for him from your acquaintance and much respected friend in this place, the Reverend Dr. Webster. Mr. Cruikshank maintains that you write the best Latin since Buchanan. I leave Edinburgh to-morrow, but shall return in three weeks. Your song you mentioned in your last, to the tune of "Dumbarton Drums," and the other, which you say was done by a brother in trade of mine, a ploughman, I shall thank you for a copy of each. I am ever, Reverend Sir, with the most respectful esteem and sincere veneration, yours,

R. B.

No. CXXXI.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN, GREENOCK.

EDINBURGH, 15*th February*, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I RECEIVED yours with the greatest pleasure. I shall arrive at Glasgow on Monday evening; and beg, if possible, you will meet me on Tuesday. I shall wait on you Tuesday all day. I shall be found at Durie's Black Bull Inn. I am hurried as if hunted by fifty devils, else I should go to Greenock; but if you cannot possibly come, write me, if possible, to Glasgow on Monday, or direct to me at Mossgiel by Mauchline, and name a day and place in Ayrshire, within a fortnight from this date, where I may meet you. I only stay a fortnight in Ayrshire, and return to Edinburgh. I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

R. B.

No. CXXXII.

TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

EDINBURGH, *Sunday, February* 17, 1788.

TO-MORROW, my dear Madam, I leave Edinburgh. I have altered all my plans of future life. A farm that I could live in I could not find; and indeed, after the necessary support my brother and the rest of the family required, I could not venture on farming in that style suitable to my feelings. You will condemn me for the next step I have taken: I have entered into the Excise. I stay in the west about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions; afterwards, for I get employ instantly, I go *où il plait à Dieu—et mon roi.* I have chosen this, my dear Friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of Fortune's palace shall we enter in, but what doors does she open to us? I was not likely to get anything to do. I wanted *un bût*, which is a dangerous, an unhappy situation. I got this without any hanging on, or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread; and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceding life. Besides, the Commissioners are some of them my acquaintances, and all of them my firm friends.

R. B.

No. CXXXIII.

TO MRS. ROSE, OF KILRAVOCK.*

EDINBURGH, 17*th February*, 1788.

MADAM,

YOU are much indebted to some indispensable business I have had on my hands, otherwise my gratitude threatened such a return for your obliging favour as would have tired your patience. It but poorly expresses my feelings to say, that I am sensible of your kindness; it may be said of hearts such as yours is, and such, I hope, mine is, much more justly than Addison applies it—

"Some souls by instinct to each other turn."

There was something in my reception at Kilravock so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse into language, the glow of my heart when I read your letter. My ready fancy, with colours more mellow than life itself, painted the beautifully wild scenery of Kilravock, the venerable grandeur of the castle; the spreading woods, the winding river, gladly leaving his unsightly, heathy source, and lingering with apparent delight as he passes the fairy walk at the bottom of the garden; your late distressful anxieties, your present enjoyments, your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes; my aged friend, venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty Spirit here, and His peculiar favour in a happier state of existence. You cannot imagine, Madam, how much such feelings delight me: they are my dearest proofs of my own immortality. Should I never revisit the north, as probably I never will, nor again see your hospitable mansion, were I, some twenty years hence, to see your little fellow's name making a proper figure in a newspaper paragraph, my heart would bound with pleasure.

I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs, set to their proper tunes; every air worth preserving is to be included: among others I have given "Morag," and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far, far inferior in real merit. As a small mark of my grateful esteem, I beg leave to present you with a copy of the work so far as it is printed: the "Man of Feeling," that first of men, has promised to transmit it by the first opportunity.

I beg to be remembered most respectfully to my venerable friend, and to your little Highland chieftain. When you see the "two fair spirits of the hill," at Kildrummie,† tell them that I have done myself the honour of setting myself down as one of their admirers for at least twenty years to come, consequently they must look upon me as an acquaintance for the same period; but as the Apostle Paul says, "this I ask of grace, not of debt." I have the honour to be, Madam, &c.,

R. B.

No. CXXXIV.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN, GREENOCK.

MOSSGIEL, 24*th February*, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I CANNOT get the proper direction for my friend in Jamaica, but the following will do:—To Mr.

* See LIFE.

† Miss Sophia Brodie, of N——, and Miss Rose of Kilravock.

Jo. Hutchinson, at Jo. Brownrigg's, Esq., care of Mr. Benjamin Henriquez, merchant, Orange Street, Kingston. I arrived here at my brother's only yesterday, after fighting my way through Paisley and Kilmarnock against those old powerful foes of mine, the devil, the world, and the flesh—so terrible in the fields of dissipation. I have met with few incidents in my life which gave me so much pleasure as meeting you in Glasgow. There is a time of life beyond which we cannot form a tie worth the name of friendship. "O youth! enchanting stage, profusely blest." Life is a fairy scene; almost all that deserves the name of enjoyment or pleasure is only a charming delusion; and in comes repining age in all the gravity of hoary wisdom, and wretchedly chases away the bewitching phantom. When I think of life, I resolve to keep a strict look-out in the course of economy, for the sake of worldly convenience and independence of mind: to cultivate intimacy with a few of the companions of youth, that they may be the friends of age; never to refuse my liquorish humour a handful of the sweetmeats of life, when they come not too dear; and, for futurity—

> "The present moment is our ain,
> The niest we never saw!"

How like you my philosophy? Give my best compliments to Mrs. B., and believe me to be, my dear Sir, yours most truly,

R. B.

No. CXXXV.

TO MR. WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK.

MAUCHLINE, 3*rd March*, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

APOLOGIES for not writing are frequently like apologies for not singing—the apology better than the song. I have fought my way severely through the savage hospitality of this country, to send every guest drunk to bed if they can.

I executed your commission in Glasgow, and I hope the cocoa came safe. 'Twas the same price and the very same kind as your former parcel, for the gentleman recollected your buying there perfectly well.

I should return my thanks for your ——— hospitality (I leave a blank for the epithet, as I know none can do it justice) to a poor, wayfaring bard, who was spent and almost overpowered fighting with prosaic wickedness in high places; but I am afraid lest you should burn the letter whenever you come to the passage, so I pass over it in silence. I am just returned from visiting Mr. Miller's farm. The friend whom I told you I would take with me* was highly pleased with the farm; and as he is, without exception, the most intelligent farmer in the country, he has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans of life before me; I shall balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. I have written Mr. Miller, and shall wait on him when I come to town, which shall be the beginning or middle of next week; I would be in sooner, but my unlucky knee is rather worse, and I fear for some time will scarcely stand the fatigue of my Excise instructions. I only mention these ideas to you; and, indeed, except Mr. Ainslie, whom I intend writing to to-morrow, I will not write at all to Edinburgh till I return to it. I would send my compliments to Mr. Nicol, but he would be hurt if he knew I wrote to anybody and not to him: so I shall only beg my best, kindest, kindest compliments to my worthy hostess and the sweet little Rose-bud.

So soon as I am settled in the routine of life, either as an Excise-officer or as a farmer, I propose myself great pleasure from a regular correspondence with the only man almost I ever saw who joined the most attentive prudence with the warmest generosity.

I am much interested for that best of men, Mr. Wood; I hope he is in better health and spirits than when I saw him last. I am ever, my dearest friend, your obliged, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXXXVI.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE,

AT MR. SAMUEL MITCHELSON'S, W.S., CARRUBBER'S CLOSE, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, 3*rd March*, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM just returned from Mr. Miller's farm. My old friend whom I took with me was highly pleased with the bargain, and advised me to accept of it. He is the most intelligent, sensible farmer in this county, and his advice has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans before me. I shall endeavour to balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. On the whole, I find Mr. Miller in the same favourable disposition as when I saw him last; I shall in all probability turn farmer.

* This was James Tennant of Glenconner, to whom one of his poetical epistles is addressed.

I have been through sore tribulation, and under much buffeting of the Wicked One, since I came to this country. Jean I found banished, like a martyr—forlorn, destitute, and friendless; all for the good old cause. I have reconciled her to her fate; I have reconciled her to her mother; I have taken her a room: I have taken her to my arms; I have given her a mahogany bed; I have given her a guinea; and I have embraced her till she rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory. But—as I always am on every occasion—I have been prudent and cautious to an astounding degree; I swore her, privately and solemnly, never to attempt any claim on me as a husband, even though any body should persuade her she had such a claim, which she had not, neither during my life, nor after my death. She did all this like a good girl, and . . . O! what a peacemaker is, &c., &c. . . .

I shall be in Edinburgh the middle of next week. My farming ideas I shall keep private till I see. I got a letter from Clarinda yesterday, and she tells me she has got no letter of mine but one. Tell her that I wrote to her from Glasgow, from Kilmarnock, from Mauchline, and yesterday from Cumnock as I returned from Dumfries. Indeed, she is the only person in Edinburgh I have written to till this day. How are your soul and body putting up?—a little like man and wife, I suppose. Your faithful friend,

R. B.

No. CXXXVII.

TO ————————.*

Mauchline, *7th March*, 1788.

My Dear Sir,

My life, since I saw you last, has been one continued hurry; that savage hospitality which knocks a man down with strong liquors is the devil. I have a sore warfare in this world—the devil, the world, and the flesh are three formidable foes. The first, I generally try to fly from; the second, alas! generally flies from me; but the third is my plague—worse than the ten plagues of Egypt.

I have been looking over several farms in this country; one in particular, in Nithsdale, pleased me so well, that if my offer to the proprietor is accepted, I shall commence farmer at Whitsunday. If farming do not appear eligible, I shall have recourse to my other shift; but this to a friend.

I set out for Edinburgh, on Monday morning; how long I stay there is uncertain, but you will know so soon as I can inform you myself. However, I determine poesy must be laid aside for some time; my mind has been vitiated by idleness, and it will take a good deal of effort to habituate it to the routine of business. I am ever, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

* As the address on this letter was torn off, the person to whom it was sent can only be conjectured.

No. CXXXVIII.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.

Mauchline, *7th March*, 1788.

I have been out of the country, my dear Friend, and have not had an opportunity of writing till now, when I am afraid you will be gone out of the country too. I have been looking at farms, and, after all, perhaps I may settle in the character of a farmer. I have got so vicious a bent to idleness, and have ever been so little a man of business, that it will take no ordinary effort to bring my mind properly into the routine: but you will say a "great effort is worthy of you." I say so myself, and butter up my vanity with all the stimulating compliments I can think of. Men of grave, geometrical minds, the sons of "which was to be demonstrated," may cry up reason as much as they please; but I have always found an honest passion, or native instinct, the truest auxiliary in the warfare of this world. Reason almost always comes to me like an unlucky wife to a poor devil of a husband—just in sufficient time to add her reproaches to his other grievances.

I found Jean with her cargo very well laid in, but unfortunately moored almost at the mercy of wind and tide. I have towed her into a convenient harbour, where she may lie snug till she unload, and have taken the command myself, not ostensibly, but for a time in secret. I am gratified with your kind inquiries after her; as, after all, I may say with Othello—

> "Excellent wretch,
> Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!"

I go for Edinburgh on Monday. Yours,

R. B.

No. CXXXIX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Mossgiel, *7th March*, 1788.

Madam,

The last paragraph in yours of the 30th February affected me most, so I shall begin my answer

where you ended your letter. That I am often a sinner with any little wit I have, I do confess: but I have taxed my recollection to no purpose, to find out when it was employed against you. I hate an ungenerous sarcasm a great deal worse than I do the devil, at least as Milton describes him; and though I may be rascally enough to be sometimes guilty of it myself, I cannot endure it in others. You, my honoured friend, who cannot appear in any light but you are sure of being respectable—you can afford to pass by an occasion to display your wit, because you may depend for fame on your sense; or, if you choose to be silent, you know you can rely on the gratitude of many and the esteem of all. But, God help us, who are wits or witlings by profession, if we stand not for fame there, we sink unsupported!

I am highly flattered by the news you tell me of Coila.* I may say to the fair painter who does me so much honour, as Dr. Beattie says to Ross the poet of his muse Scota, from which, by the bye, I took the idea of Coila: 'Tis a poem of Beattie's in the Scots dialect, which perhaps you have never seen:—

"Ye shak' your head, but o' my fegs,
Ye 've set auld Scota on her legs:
Lang had she lien wi' buffs and flegs,
Bombaz'd and dizzie.
Her fiddle wanted strings and pegs,
Wae 's me, poor hizzie."

R. B.

No. CXL.

TO MR. ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK.

Mossgiel, 7*th March*, 1788.

I have partly changed my ideas, my dear friend, since I saw you. I took old Glenconner with me to Mr. Miller's farm, and he was so pleased with it, that I have wrote an offer to Mr. Miller, which, if he accepts, I shall sit down a plain farmer—the happiest of lives when a man can live by it. In this case I shall not stay in Edinburgh above a week. I set out on Monday, and would have come by Kilmarnock; but there are several small sums owing me for my first edition about Galston and Newmills, and I shall set off so early as to dispatch my business and reach Glasgow by night. When I return, I shall devote a forenoon or two to make some kind of acknowledgment for all the kindness I owe your friendship. Now that I hope to settle with some credit and comfort at home, there was not any friendship or friendly correspondence that promised me more pleasure than yours; I hope I will not be disappointed. I trust the spring will renew your shattered frame, and make your friends happy. You and I have often agreed that life is no great blessing on the whole. The close of life, indeed, to a reasoning eye, is

"Dark as was Chaos, ere the infant sun
Was roll'd together, or had try'd his beams
Athwart the gloom profound."

But an honest man has nothing to fear. If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broke machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants: if that part of us called Mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with the old-wife prejudices and tales! Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence, they have often, perhaps always, been deceived. A man conscious of having acted an honest part among his fellow-creatures—even granting that he may have been the sport at times of passions and instincts—he goes to a great unknown Being, who could have no other end in giving him existence but to make him happy; who gave him those passions and instincts, and well knows their force.

These, my worthy friend, are my ideas; and I know they are not far different from yours. It becomes a man of sense to think for himself, particularly in a case where all men are equally interested, and where, indeed, all men are equally in the dark.

Those copies of mine you have on hand, please send ten of them to Mr. John Ballantine, of the Bank in Ayr: for the remainder, I 'll write you about them from Glasgow.

Adieu, my dear Sir; God send us a cheerful meeting!

R. B.

No. CXLI.

MISS MARGARET CHALMERS, HARVIESTON.

Edinburgh, 14*th March*, 1788.

I know, my ever dear friend, that you will be pleased with the news, when I tell you I have at last taken a lease of a farm. Yesternight I completed a bargain with Mr. Miller, of Dalswinton, for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above

* Referring to a sketch of Coila in the Vision, by Rachel Dunlop, daughter of Mrs. Dunlop, afterwards Mrs. Robert Glasgow.

Dumfries. I begin at Whitsunday to build a house, drive lime, &c., and heaven be my help! for it will take a strong effort to bring my mind into the routine of business. I have discharged all the army of my former pursuits, fancies, and pleasures; a motley host! and have literally and strictly retained only the ideas of a few friends, which I have incorporated into a life-guard. I trust in Dr. Johnson's observation, "Where much is attempted, something is done." Firmness, both in sufferance and exertion, is a character I would wish to be thought to possess; and have always despised the whining yelp of complaint, and the cowardly, feebly, resolve. . . .

Poor Miss K.* is ailing a good deal this winter, and begged me to remember her to you the first time I wrote to you. Surely woman, amiable woman, is often made in vain. Too delicately formed for the rougher pursuits of ambition; too noble for the dirt of avarice, and even too gentle for the rage of pleasure—formed indeed for, and highly susceptible of enjoyment and rapture; but that enjoyment, alas! almost wholly at the mercy of the caprice, malevolence, stupidity, or wickedness of an animal at all times comparatively unfeeling, and often brutal.

No. CXLII.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN, GREENOCK.

GLASGOW, 26*th March*, 1788.

I AM monstrously to blame, my dear Sir, in not writing to you and sending you the Directory. I have been getting my tack extended, as I have taken a farm; and I have been racking shop accounts with Mr. Creech, both of which, together with watching, fatigue, and a load of care almost too heavy for my shoulders, have in some degree actually fevered me. I really forgot the Directory yesterday, which vexed me; but I was convulsed with rage a great part of the day. I have to thank you for the ingenious, friendly, and elegant epistle from your friend Mr. Crawford. I shall certainly write to him, but not now. This is merely a card to you, as I am posting to Dumfriesshire, where many perplexing arrangements await me. I am vexed about the Directory; but, my dear Sir, forgive me: these eight days I have been positively crazed. My compliments to Mrs. B. I shall write to you at Grenada. I am ever, my dearest friend, yours,

R. B.

* Miss Kennedy, sister of Mrs. Gavin Hamilton. She lived till over ninety, and on breaking her arm by a fall expressed gratitude that it was not her leg, for then she would have been lame for life.

No. CXLIII.

TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN, EDINBURGH.†

MAUCHLINE, 31*st March*, 1788.

YESTERDAY, my dear Sir, as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless muirs, between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; and your favourite air, "Captain O'Kean," coming at length into my head, I tried these words to it. You will see that the first part of the tune must be repeated:—

"The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,
The murmuring streamlet winds clear thro' the vale;
The hawthorn-trees blow in the dew of the morning,
And wild scatter'd cowslips bedeck the green dale."‡

I am tolerably pleased with these verses; but as I have only a sketch of the tune, I leave it with you to try if they suit the measure of the music.

I am so harassed with care and anxiety about this farming project of mine, that my muse has degenerated into the veriest prose-wench that ever picked cinders or followed a tinker. When I am fairly got into the routine of business, I shall trouble you with a longer epistle, perhaps with some queries respecting farming; at present, the world sits such a load on my mind that it has effaced almost every trace of the poet in me.

My very best compliments and best wishes to Mrs. Cleghorn.

R. B.

No. CXLIV.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON.

MOSSGIEL, *Friday Morning.*

THE language of refusal is to me the most difficult language on earth, and you are the man in the world, excepting one of Right Honourable designation, to whom it gives me the greatest pain to hold such language. My brother has already got money, and shall want nothing in my power to enable him to fulfil his engagement with you; but to be security on so large a scale, even for a brother, is what I dare not do, except I were in such circumstances of life as that the worst that might happen could not greatly injure me.

† Mr. Cleghorn, a farmer and a musical amateur. He took Burns' advice, and set the verses to music, as "The Chevalier's Lament."

‡ See vol. i. p. 141.

I never wrote a letter which gave me so much pain in my life, as I know the unhappy consequences: I shall incur the displeasure of a gentleman for whom I have the highest respect, and to whom I am deeply obliged. I am ever, Sir, your obliged and very humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXLV.

TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR, EDINBURGH.*

MAUCHLINE, *7th April*, 1788.

I HAVE not delayed so long to write you, my much respected friend, because I thought no further of my promise. I have long since given up that kind of formal correspondence, where one sits down irksomely to write a letter, because we are in duty bound to do so.

I have been roving over the country, as the farm I have taken is forty miles from this place, hiring servants and preparing matters; but most of all, I am earnestly busy to bring about a revolution in my own mind. As, till within these eighteen months, I never was the wealthy master of ten guineas, my knowledge of business is to learn; add to this, my late scenes of idleness and dissipation have enervated my mind to an alarming degree. Skill in the sober science of life is my most serious and hourly study. I have dropt all conversation and all reading (prose reading) but what tends in some way or other to my serious aim. Except one worthy young fellow, I have not a single correspondent in Edinburgh. You have indeed kindly made me an offer of that kind. The world of wits, and *gens comme il faut* which I lately left, and with whom I never again will intimately mix—from that port, Sir, I expect your Gazette: what *les beaux esprits* are saying, what they are doing, and what they are singing. Any sober intelligence from my sequestered walks of life; any droll original; any passing remark, important, forsooth, because it is mine; any little poetic effort, however embryoth; these, my dear Sir, are all you have to expect from me. When I talk of poetic efforts, I must have it always understood, that I appeal from your wit and taste to your friendship and good nature. The first would be my favourite tribunal, where I defied censure; but the last, where I declined justice.

I have scarcely made a single distich since I saw you. When I meet with an old Scots air, that has any facetious idea in its name, I have a peculiar pleasure in following out that idea for a verse or two.

* Mr. Dunbar, Writer to the Signet, and member of the Crochallan Fencible Club, is the hero of the song "Rattlin Roaring Willie."

I trust that this will find you in better health than I did the last time I called for you. A few lines from you, directed to me, at Mauchline, were it but to let me know how you are, will ease my mind a good deal. Now, never shun the idea of writing me because perhaps you may be out of spirits. I could give you a hundred good consequences attending a dull letter; one, for example, and the remaining ninety-nine some other time—it will always serve to keep in countenance, my much respected Sir, your obliged friend and humble servant,

R. B.

No. CXLVI.

TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS.

MAUCHLINE, *7th April*, 1788.

I AM indebted to you and Miss Nimmo for letting me know Miss Kennedy. Strange! how apt we are to indulge prejudice in our judgments of one another! Even I, who pique myself on my skill in marking characters—because I am too proud of my character as a man to be dazzled in my judgment for glaring wealth, and too proud of my situation as a poor man to be biassed against squalid poverty—I was unacquainted with Miss K.'s very uncommon worth.

I am going on a good deal progressive in *mon grand bût*, the sober science of life. I have lately made some sacrifices, for which, were I *vivâ voce* with you to paint the situation and recount the circumstances, you would applaud me.†

R. B.

No. CXLVII.

TO MR. JAMES SMITH, AVON PRINTFIELD, LINLITHGOW.

MAUCHLINE, *April* 28, 1788.

BEWARE of your Strasburgh, my good Sir! Look on this as the opening of a correspondence, like the opening of a twenty-four gun battery!

There is no understanding a man properly, without knowing sometimes of his previous ideas—that is to say, if the man has any ideas; for I know many who, in the

† Alluding to his intentions to Jean.

animal-muster, pass for men, that are the scanty masters of only one idea on any given subject, and by far the greatest part of your acquaintances and mine can barely boast of ideas, 1·25—1·5—1·75, or some such fractional matter. So to let you a little into the secrets of my pericranium, there is, you must know, a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance, to whom I have lately and privately given a matrimonial title to my corpus.

"Bode a robe and wear it,
Bode a pock and bear it"

says the wise old Scots adage! I hate to presage ill-luck; and as my girl has been *doubly* kinder to me than even the best of women usually are to their partners of our sex, in similar circumstances, I reckon on twelve times a brace of children against I celebrate my twelfth wedding-day: these twenty-four will give me twenty-four gossippings, twenty-four christenings (I mean one equal to two), and I hope, by the blessing of the God of my fathers, to make them twenty-four dutiful children to their parents, twenty-four useful members of society, and twenty-four approved servants to their God! . . . .

"Light 's heartsome," quo' the wife when she was stealing sheep. You see what a lamp I have hung up to lighten your paths, when you are idle enough to explore the combinations and relations of my ideas. 'Tis now as plain as a pike-staff, why a twenty-four gun battery was a metaphor I could readily employ.

Now for business. I intend to present Mrs. Burns with a printed shawl, an article of which I dare say you have variety: 'tis my first present to her since I have irrevocably called her mine, and I have a kind of whimsical wish to get the first said present from an old and valued friend of hers and mine, a trusty Trojan, whose friendship I count myself possessed of as a life-rent lease.

Look on this letter as a "beginning of sorrows;" I will write you till your eyes ache reading nonsense.

Mrs. Burns* ('tis only her private designation) begs her best compliments to you.

R. B.

No. CXLVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 28*th April*, 1788.

MADAM,

YOUR powers of reprehension must be great indeed, as I assure you they made my heart ache with penitential pangs, even though I was really not guilty. As I commence farmer at Whitsunday, you will easily guess I must be pretty busy; but that is not all. As I got the offer of the Excise business without solicitation, and as it cost me only six weeks' attendance for instructions, to entitle me for a commission—which commission lies by me, and at any future period, on my simple petition, can be resumed—I thought five-and-thirty pounds a year was no bad *dernier ressort* for a poor poet, if fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.

For this reason I am at present attending these instructions, to have them completed before Whitsunday. Still, Madam, I prepared with the sincerest pleasure to meet you at the Mount, and came to my brother's on Saturday night, to set out on Sunday; but for some nights preceding I had slept in an apartment, where the force of the winds and rains was only mitigated by being sifted through numberless apertures in the windows, walls, &c. In consequence I was on Sunday, Monday, and part of Tuesday, unable to stir out of bed, with all the miserable effects of a violent cold.

You see, Madam, the truth of the French maxim, *Le vrai n'est pas toujours le vrai-semblable;* your last was so full of expostulation, and was something so like the language of an offended friend, that I began to tremble for a correspondence, which I had with grateful pleasure set down as one of the greatest enjoyments of my future life. . . .

Your books have delighted me: Virgil, Dryden, and Tasso were all equally strangers to me; but of this more at large in my next.

R. B.

No. CXLIX.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.

MAUCHLINE, 3*rd May*, 1788.

SIR,

I INCLOSE you one or two more of my bagatelles. If the fervent wishes of honest gratitude have any influence with that great unknown Being, who frames the chain of causes and events, prosperity and happiness will attend your visit to the continent, and return you safe to your native shore.

Wherever I am, allow me, Sir, to claim it as my privilege to acquaint you with my progress in my trade of rhymes; as I am sure I could say it with truth, that, next to my little fame, and the having it in my power to make life more comfortable to those whom nature has made

* First indication of Burns recognizing Jean as his wife.

dear to me, I shall ever regard your countenance, your patronage, your friendly good offices, as the most valued consequence of my late success in life. I have the honour to be, most truly, Sir, your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CL.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Mauchline, *4th May*, 1788.

Madam,

Dryden's Virgil has delighted me. I do not know whether the critics will agree with me, but the Georgics are to me by far the best of Virgil. It is indeed a species of writing entirely new to me, and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation: but, alas! when I read the Georgics, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland pony, drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter, to start for the plate. I own I am disappointed in the Æneid. Faultless correctness may please, and does highly please, the lettered critic: but to that awful character I have not the most distant pretensions. I do not know whether I do not hazard my pretensions to be a critic of any kind when I say that I think Virgil, in many instances, a servile copier of Homer. If I had the Odyssey by me, I could parallel many passages where Virgil has evidently copied, but by no means improved, Homer. Nor can I think there is any thing of this owing to the translators; for, from every thing I have seen of Dryden, I think him, in genius and fluency of language, Pope's master. I have not perused Tasso enough to form an opinion: in some future letter, you shall have my ideas of him; though I am conscious my criticisms must be very inaccurate and imperfect, as there I have ever felt and lamented my want of learning most.

R. B.

No. CLI.

TO MR. SAMUEL BROWN, KIRKOSWALD.

Mossgiel, *4th May*, 1788.

Dear Uncle,

This, I hope, will find you and your conjugal yoke-fellow in your good old way. I am impatient to know if the Ailsa fowling be commenced for this season yet, as I want three or four stones of feathers, and I hope you will bespeak them for me. It would be a vain attempt for me to enumerate the various transactions I have been engaged in since I saw you last; but this know—I engaged in a *smuggling trade*, and God knows if ever any poor man experienced better returns—two for one: but as freight and delivery have turned out so dear, I am thinking of taking out a licence, and beginning in fair trade.

I have taken a farm on the borders of the Nith, and in imitation of the old patriarchs, get men-servants and maid-servants, and flocks and herds, and beget sons and daughters. Your obedient nephew,

R. B.

No. CLII.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

Mauchline, *25th May*, 1788.

My Dear Sir,

I am really uneasy about that money which Mr. Creech owes me per note in your hand, and I want it much at present as I am engaging in business pretty deeply both for myself and my brother. A hundred guineas can be but a trifling affair to him, and 'tis a matter of most serious importance to me. To-morrow I begin my operations as a farmer, and God speed the plough!

I am so enamoured of a certain girl's prolific, twin-bearing merit, that I have given her a legal title to the best blood in my body, and so farewell rakery! To be serious, I found I had a long and much loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my hands; and though Pride and seeming Justice were murderous King's Advocates on the one side, yet Humanity, Generosity, and Forgiveness, were such powerful, such irresistible council on the other side, that a jury of all Endearments and new attachments brought in a unanimous verdict *Not Guilty!* And the Panel, be it known unto all whom it concerns, is installed and instated into all the rights, privileges, immunities, franchises, services, and paraphernalia that at present do, or at any time coming may, belong to the name, title, and designation. [MS. *torn away here.*]

Present my best compliments to . . . .

R. B.

No. CLIII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

MAUCHLINE, *May* 26, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM two kind letters in your debt; but I have been from home, and horridly busy, buying and preparing for my farming business, over and above the plague of my Excise instructions, which this week will finish.

As I flatter my wishes that I foresee many future years' correspondence between us, 'tis foolish to talk of excusing dull epistles; a dull letter may be a very kind one. I have the pleasure to tell you that I have been extremely fortunate in all my buyings and bargainings hitherto, Mrs. Burns not excepted; which title I now avow to the world. I am truly pleased with this last affair: it has indeed added to my anxieties for futurity, but it has given a stability to my mind and my resolutions unknown before; and the poor girl has the most sacred enthusiasm of attachment to me, and has not a wish but to gratify my every idea of her deportment. I am interrupted. Farewell! my dear Sir.

R. B.

No. CLIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 27*th May*, 1788.

MADAM,

I HAVE been torturing my philosophy to no purpose, to account for that kind partiality of yours, which unlike . . . . . , has followed me, in my return to the shade of life, with assiduous benevolence. Often did I regret, in the fleeting hours of my late will-o'-wisp appearance, that "here I had no continuing city;" and, but for the consolation of a few solid guineas, could almost lament the time that a momentary acquaintance with wealth and splendour put me so much out of conceit with the sworn companions of my road through life—insignificance and poverty. . . . .

There are few circumstances relating to the unequal distribution of the good things of this life that give me more vexation (I mean in what I see around me) than the importance the opulent bestow on their trifling family affairs, compared with the very same things on the contracted scale of a cottage. Last afternoon I had the honour to spend an hour or two at a good woman's fireside, where the planks that composed the floor were decorated with a splendid carpet, and the gay table sparkled with silver and china. 'Tis now about term-day, and there has been a revolution among those creatures,* who, though in appearance partakers, and equally noble partakers, of the same nature with Madame, are from time to time—their nerves, their sinews, their health, strength, wisdom, experience, genius, time, nay a good part of their very thoughts—sold for months and years, ... not only to the necessities, the conveniences, but, the caprices of the important few. We talked of the insignificant creatures; nay, notwithstanding their general stupidity and rascality, did some of the poor devils the honour to commend them. But light be the turf upon his breast who taught, "Reverence thyself!" We look down on the unpolished wretches, their impertinent wives and clouterly brats, as the lordly bull does on the little dirty ant-hill, whose puny inhabitants he crushes in the carelessness of his ramble, or tosses in the air in the wantonness of his pride.

R. B.

No. CLV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP,

AT MR. DUNLOP'S, HADDINGTON.

ELLISLAND, 14*th June*, 1788

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms I see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my friend it turns with ceaseless pain,
And drags, at each remove, a lengthen'd chain."

GOLDSMITH.

THIS is the second day, my honoured friend, that I have been on my farm. A solitary inmate of an old, smoky spence; far from every object I love, or by whom I am beloved; nor any acquaintance older than yesterday, except Jenny Geddes, the old mare I ride on; while uncouth cares and novel plans hourly insult my awkward ignorance and bashful inexperience. There is a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care; consequently the dreary objects seem larger than life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments, at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind.

"The valiant, in himself what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes?" &c.

* The poet here alludes to the hiring-season of servants, which in Scotland is half-yearly.

Your surmise, Madam, is just; I am indeed a husband.

. . . . . .

I found a once much-loved and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements; but as I enabled her to *purchase* a shelter, and there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery. . . . . The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than common handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny pay wedding.

R. B.

No. CLVI.

EXTRACT FROM THE AUTHOR'S JOURNAL.

ELLISLAND, *Sunday, 15th June*, 1788.

THIS is now the third day that I have been in this country. "Lord! what is man?" What a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies! And what a capricious kind of existence he has here! . . . . There is, indeed, an elsewhere, where, as Thomson says, "virtue sole survives."

> "Tell us, ye dead;
> Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
> What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
> A little time
> Will make us wise as you are, and as close."

I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's *Adam*, "gladly lay me in my mother's lap, and be at peace."

But a wife and children bind me to struggle with the stream, till some sudden squall shall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness reduce it to a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of wit and humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence; nay, often poisoning the whole, that, like the plains of Jericho, "the water is naught, and the ground barren," and nothing short of a supernaturally gifted Elisha can ever heal the evils.

Wedlock—the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be anything with me but names—was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on; in my present situation it was absolutely necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest pride of character, justice to my own happiness for after-life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace; all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on her part to repent it. I can fancy how, but have never seen where, I could have made a better choice. Come then, let me act up to my favourite motto—that glorious passage in Young—

> "On reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man!"

R. B.

No. CLVII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, *June* 15, 1788.

THIS is now the third day, my dearest Sir, that I have sojourned in these regions; and during these three days you have occupied more of my thoughts than in three weeks preceding; in Ayrshire I have several variations of friendship's compass: here it points invariably to the pole. My farm gives me a good many uncouth cares and anxieties, but I hate the language of complaint. Job, or some one of his friends, says well—"Why should a living man complain?"

I have lately been much mortified with contemplating an unlucky imperfection in the very framing and construction of my soul; namely, a blundering inaccuracy of her olfactory organs in hitting the scent of craft or design in my fellow-creatures. I do not mean any compliment to my ingenuousness, or to hint that the defect is in consequence of the unsuspicious simplicity of conscious truth and honour: I take it to be, in some way or other, an imperfection in the mental sight; or, metaphor apart, some modification of dulness. In two or three small instances lately, I have been most shamefully out.

I have all along hitherto, in the warfare of life, been bred to arms among the light-horse, the piquet-guards of fancy; a kind of Hussars and Highlanders of the brain; but I am firmly resolved to sell out of these giddy battalions, who have no ideas of a battle but fighting the foe, or of a siege but storming the town. Cost what it will, I am determined to buy in among the grave squadrons of heavy-armed thought, or the artillery corps of plodding contrivance.

What books are you reading, or what is the subject

of your thoughts, besides the great studies of your profession? You said something about Religion in your last. I don't exactly remember what it was, as the letter is in Ayrshire; but I thought it not only prettily said, but nobly thought. You will make a noble fellow if once you were married. I make no reservation of your being well married; you have so much sense and knowledge of human nature, that though you may not realize perhaps the ideas of romance, yet you will never be ill married.

Were it not for the terrors of my ticklish situation respecting provision for a family of children, I am decidedly of opinion, that the step I have taken is vastly for my happiness.* As it is, I look to the Excise scheme as a certainty of maintenance. A maintenance! A luxury to what either Mrs. Burns or I were born to. Adieu.

R. B.

No. CLVIII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, 23*rd June*, 1788.

THIS letter, my dear Sir, is only a business scrap. Mr. Miers, profile painter in your town, has executed a profile of Dr. Blacklock for me: do me the favour to call for it, and sit to him yourself for me, which put in the same size as the doctor's. The account of both profiles will be fifteen shillings, which I have given to James Connel, our Mauchline carrier, to pay you when you give him the parcel. You must not, my friend, refuse to sit. The time is short; when I sat to Mr. Miers, I am sure he did not exceed two minutes. I propose hanging Lord Glencairn, the doctor, and you, in trio, over my new chimney-piece that is to be. Adieu.

R. B.

No. CLIX.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 30*th June*, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I JUST now received your brief epistle; and, to take vengeance on your laziness, I have, you see, taken a long sheet of writing paper, and have begun at the top of the page, intending to scribble on to the very last corner.

I am vexed at that affair of the . . . . . , but dare not enlarge on the subject until you send me your direction, as I suppose that will be altered on your late master and friend's death.† I am concerned for the old fellow's exit, only as I fear it may be to your disadvantage in any respect—for an old man's dying, except he have been a very benevolent character, or in some particular situation of life that the welfare of the poor or the helpless depended on him, I think it an event of the most trifling moment to the world. Man is naturally a kind, benevolent animal, but he is dropped into such a needy situation here, in this vexatious world, and has such a whoreson, hungry, growling, multiplying pack of necessities, appetites, passions, and desires about him, ready to devour him for want of other food; that in fact he must lay aside his cares for others that he may look properly to himself. You have been imposed upon in paying Mr. Miers for the profile of a Mr. H. I did not mention it in my letter to you, nor did I ever give Mr. Miers any such order. I have no objection to lose the money, but I will *not* have any such profile in my possession.

I desired the carrier to pay you, but as I mentioned only fifteen shillings to him, I will rather enclose you a guinea note. I have it not, indeed, to spare here, as I am only a sojourner in a strange land in this place; but in a day or two I return to Mauchline, and there I have the bank notes through the house like salt permits.

There is a great degree of folly in talking unnecessarily of one's private affairs. I have just now been interrupted by one of my new neighbours, who has made himself absolutely contemptible in my eyes, by his silly, garrulous pruriency. I know it has been a fault of my own, too; but from this moment I abjure it as I would the service of hell! Your poets, spendthrifts, and other fools of that kidney, pretend, forsooth, to crack their jokes on prudence; but 'tis a squalid vagabond glorying in his rags. Still, imprudence respecting money matters is much more pardonable than imprudence respecting character. I have no objection to prefer prodigality to avarice, in some few instances; but I appeal to your observation, if you have not met, and often met, with the same disingenuousness, the same hollow-hearted insincerity, and disintegritive depravity of principle, in the hackneyed victims of profusion, as in the unfeeling children of parsimony. I have every possible reverence for the much talked of world beyond the grave, and I wish that which piety believes, and virtue deserves, may be all matter of fact. But in things belonging to, and terminating in this present

* His marriage.

† Mr. Samuel Mitchelson, W.S., Ainslie's master, died on the 21st June, 1788.

scene of existence, man has serious and interesting business on hand. Whether a man shall shake hands with welcome in the distinguished elevation of respect, or shrink from contempt in the abject corner of insignificance; whether he shall wanton under the tropic of plenty, at least enjoy himself in the comfortable latitudes of easy convenience, or starve in the arctic circle of dreary poverty: whether he shall rise in the manly consciousness of a self-approving mind, or sink beneath a galling load of regret and remorse—these are alternatives of the last moment.

You see how I preach. You used occasionally to sermonize too; I wish you would, in charity, favour me with a sheet-full in your own way. I admire the close of a letter Lord Bolingbroke writes to Dean Swift:—"Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults, I love thee entirely: make an effort to love me with all mine!" Humble servant, and all that trumpery, is now such a prostituted business, that honest Friendship, in her sincere way, must have recourse to her primitive, simple—farewell!

R. B.

No. CLX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Mauchline, 10*th July*, 1788.

My much Honoured Friend,

Yours of the 24th June is before me. I found it, as well as another valued friend—my wife—waiting to welcome me to Ayrshire: I met both with the sincerest pleasure.

When I write you, Madam, I do not sit down to answer every paragraph of yours, by echoing every sentiment, like the faithful Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, answering a speech from the best of kings! I express myself in the fulness of my heart, and may, perhaps, be guilty of neglecting some of your kind inquiries; but not from your very odd reason, that I do not read your letters. All your epistles for several months have cost me nothing, except a swelling throb of gratitude or a deep-felt sentiment of veneration.

Mrs. Burns, Madam, is the identical woman, ... When she first found herself "as women wish to be who love their lords," as I loved her nearly to distraction, we took steps for a private marriage. Her parents got the hint; and not only forbade me her company and their house, but, on my rumoured West Indian voyage, got a warrant to put me in jail, till I should find security in my about-to-be paternal relation. You know my lucky reverse of fortune. On my *éclatant* return to Mauchline, I was made welcome to visit my girl. The usual consequences began to betray her; and as I was at that time laid up a cripple in Edinburgh, she was turned, literally turned out of doors, and I wrote to a friend to shelter her till my return, when our marriage was declared. Her happiness or misery were in my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger. My preservative against the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honour, and her attachment to me: my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. I can easily fancy a more agreeable companion for my journey of life; but, upon my honour, I have never seen the individual instance. In household matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute she is eminently mistress; and during my absence in Nithsdale, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy and other rural business. The Muses must not be offended when I tell them, the concerns of my wife and family will, in my mind, always take the *pas;* but I assure them their ladyships will ever come next in place. You are right, that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number.

Circumstanced as I am, I could never have got a female partner for life, who could have entered into my favourite studies, relished my favourite authors, &c., without probably entailing on me at the same time expensive living, fantastic caprice, perhaps apish affectation, with all the blessed boarding-school acquirements, which *(pardonnez moi, Madame)* are sometimes to be found among females of the upper ranks, but almost universally pervade the misses of the would-be gentry.

I like your way in your church-yard lucubrations. Thoughts that are the spontaneous result of accidental situations, either respecting health, place, or company, have often a strength, and always an originality, that would in vain be looked for in fancied circumstances and studied paragraphs. For me, I have often thought of keeping a letter, in progression, by me, to send you when the sheet was written out. Now I talk of sheets, I must tell you, my reason for writing to you on paper of this kind is my pruriency of writing to you at large. A page of post is on such a dis-social, narrow-minded scale, that I cannot abide it; and double letters, at least in my miscellaneous reverie manner, are a monstrous tax in a close correspondence.

R. B.

No. CLXI.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th July*, 1788.

YOU injured me, my dear Sir, in your construction of the cause of my silence. From Ellisland in Nithsdale to Mauchline in Kyle is forty and five miles. *There*, a house a-building, and farm enclosures and improvements to tend; *here*, a new—not so much indeed a *new* as a *young* wife: good God, Sir, could my dearest brother expect a regular correspondence from me! I who am busied with the sacred pen of Nature, in the mystic volume of Creation—can I dishonour my hand with a dirty goose-feather, on a parcel of mashed old rags? I who am "called as was Aaron," to offer in the *sanctum sanctorum*, not indeed the mysterious, bloody types of future MURDER, but the thrice hallowed quintessences of future EXISTENCE—can I—but I have apologized enough. I am certain that you, my liberal-minded and much-respected friend, would have acquitted me, though I had obeyed to the very letter that famous statute among the irrevocable decrees of the Medes and Persians, not to ask petition, for forty days, of either God or man, save thee, O Queen, only!

I am highly obliged to you, my dearest Sir, for your kind, your elegant compliments on my becoming one of that most respectable, that most truly venerable corps, they who are, without a metaphor, the fathers of posterity, the benefactors of all coming generations; the editors of Spiritual Nature, and the authors of Immortal Being. Now that I am "one of you," I shall humbly but fervently endeavour to be a conspicuous member. Now it is "called to-day" with my powers and me, and the time fast approacheth when, beholding the debilitated victim of all-subduing Time, they shall exclaim, "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

Your book came safe, and I am going to trouble you with further commissions. I call it troubling you—because I want only *books;* the cheapest way the best; so you may have to hunt for them in the evening auctions. I want Smollett's works, for the sake of his incomparable humour. I have already "Roderick Random" and "Humphrey Clinker." "Peregrine Pickle," "Launcelot Greaves," and "Ferdinand Count Fathom," I still want; but as I said, the veriest ordinary copies will serve me. I am nice only in the appearance of my poets. I forget the price of Cowper's Poems, but I believe I must have them. I saw the other day proposals for a publication entitled "Bank's New and Complete Christian's Family Bible," printed for C. Cooke, Paternoster Row, London. He promises at least to give in the work, I think it is three hundred and odd engravings, to which he has put the names of the first artists in London. You will know the character of the performance, as some numbers of it are published: and if it is really what it pretends to be, set me down as a subscriber, and send me the published numbers.

Let me hear from you your first leisure minute, and trust me you shall in future have no reason to complain of my silence. The dazzling perplexity of novelty will dissipate, and leave me to pursue my course in the quiet path of methodical routine.

I might go on to fill up the page, but I dare say you are already sufficiently tired of, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

No. CLXII.

TO MR. GEORGE LOCKHART, MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

MAUCHLINE, 18*th July*, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I AM just going for Nithsdale, else I would certainly have transcribed some of my rhyming things for you. The Miss Baillies I have seen in Edinburgh.* "Fair and lovely are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Who would not praise thee for these thy gifts in thy goodness to the sons of men!" It needed not your fine taste to admire them. I declare, one day I had the honour of dining at Mr. Baillie's, I was almost in the predicament of the children of Israel, when they could not look on Moses' face for the glory that shone in it when he descended from Mount Horeb.

I did once write a poetic address from the Falls of Bruar to his grace of Athole, when I was in the Highlands. When you return to Scotland, let me know, and I will send such of my pieces as please myself best. I return to Mauchline in about ten days.

My compliments to Mr. Purden. I am in truth, but at present in haste, yours sincerely,

R. B.

* See the song on Miss Lesley Baillie.

No. CLXIII.

TO MR. ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, WRITER, ST. JAMES' SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, NITHSDALE, *July* 27, 1788.

"MY GODLIKE FRIEND—

Nay, do not stare,
You think the phrase is odd-like;
But 'God is Love,' the saints declare—
Then, surely thou art god-like," &c. *

MY spur-galled, spavened Pegasus makes so hobbling a progress over the course of Extempore, that I must here alight and try the foot-path of plain prose. I have not met with anything this long while, my dear Sir, that has given my inward man such a fillip as your kind epistle.

For my own Biographical story, I can only say with the venerable Hebrew Patriarch—"Here am I with the children God has given me!" I have been a farmer since Whitsunday, and am just now building a house—not a Palace to attract the train-attended steps of pride-swollen Greatness, but a plain, simple domicile for Humility and Contentment. I am, too, a married man. This was a step of which I had no idea when you and I were together. On my return to Ayrshire, I found a much-loved female's positive happiness or absolute misery among my hands, and I could not trifle with such a sacred deposit. I am, since, doubly pleased with my conduct. I have the consciousness of acting up to that generosity of principle which I would be thought to possess, and I am really more and more pleased with my choice. When I tell you that Mrs. Burns was once "my Jean," you will know the rest. Of four children she bore me in seventeen months, my eldest boy is only living. By the bye, I intend breeding him up for the Church; and from an innate dexterity in secret mischief which he possesses, and a certain hypocritical gravity as he looks on the consequences, I have no small hopes of him in the sacerdotal line.

Mrs. Burns does not come from Ayrshire till my said new house be ready, so I am eight or ten days at Mauchline and this place alternately. Hitherto my direction was only "at Mauchline," but "at Ellisland, near Dumfries," will now likewise find me; though I prefer the former. I need not tell you that I shall expect to hear from you soon. Adieu!

R. B.

Lowe's poem I shall transcribe in my first leisure hour.

R. B.

* See vol. i. p. 150.

No. CLXIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

MAUCHLINE, 2*nd August*, 1788.

HONOURED MADAM,

YOUR kind letter welcomed me yesternight to Ayrshire. I am, indeed, seriously angry with you at the quantum of your luckpenny; but, vexed and hurt as I was, I could not help laughing very heartily at the noble lord's apology for the missed napkin.

I would write you from Nithsdale, and give you my direction there, but I have scarce an opportunity of calling at a post-office once in a fortnight. I am six miles from Dumfries, am scarcely ever in it myself, and as yet have little acquaintance in the neighbourhood. Besides, I am now very busy on my farm, building a dwelling-house; as at present I am almost an evangelical man in Nithsdale, for I have scarce "where to lay my head."

There are some passages in your last that brought tears in my eyes. "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." The repository of these "sorrows of the heart" is a kind of *sanctum sanctorum:* and 'tis only a chosen friend, and that, too, at particular, sacred times, who dares enter into them:—

"Heaven oft tears the bosom-chords
That Nature finest strung."

You will excuse the quotation for the sake of the author. Instead of entering on this subject farther, I shall transcribe you a few lines I wrote in a hermitage, belonging to a gentleman in my, Nithsdale, neighbourhood. They are almost the only favours the muses have conferred on me in that country:—

Thou whom chance may hither lead, &c.†

Since I am in the way of transcribing, the following were the production of yesterday as I jogged through the wild hills of New Cumnock. I intended inserting them, or something like them, in an epistle I am going to write to the gentleman on whose friendship my Excise hopes depend—Mr. Graham of Fintry, one of the worthiest and most accomplished gentlemen, not only of this country, but, I will dare to say it, of this age. The following are just the first crude thoughts "unhousel'd, unanointed, unanneal'd:"—

Pity the tuneful Muses' helpless train,
Weak, timid landsmen on Life's stormy main!
The world were blest, did bliss on them depend;
Ah, that "the friendly e'er should want a friend!"

† See vol. i. pp. 142, 148.

The little Fate bestows they share as soon ;
Unlike sage, proverb'd Wisdom's hard-wrung boon.
Let Prudence number o'er each sturdy son,
Who life and wisdom at one race begun ;
Who feel by reason and who give by rule
(Instinct 's a brute and sentiment a fool !);
Who make poor *will do* wait upon *I should;*
We own they 're prudent, but who feels they 're good ?
Ye wise ones, hence ! ye hurt the social eye ;
God's image rudely etch'd on base alloy !
But come, ye . . . . . .*

Here the Muse left me. I am astonished at what you tell me of Anthony's writing me. I never received it. Poor fellow ! you vex me much by telling me that he is unfortunate. I shall be in Ayrshire ten days from this date. I have just room for an old Roman farewell !

R. B.

No. CLXV.

TO MR. ROBERT M'INDOE, MERCHANT, GLASGOW.

Mauchline, *5th August*, 1788.

My Dear Sir,

I am vexed for nothing more, that I have not been at Glasgow, than not meeting with you. I have seldom found my friend Andrew M'Culloch wrong in his ideas of mankind ; but respecting your worship he was as true as Holy Writ. This is the night of our fair, and I, as you see, cannot keep well *in a line:* but if you will send me by the bearer, John Ronald, carrier between Glasgow and Mauchline, fifteen yards of black silk, the same kind as that of which I bought a gown and petticoat from you formerly—lutestring, I think is its name—I shall send you the money and a more coherent letter, when he goes again to your good town. To be brief, send me fifteen yards black lutestring silk, such as they used to make gowns and petticoats of, and I shall choose, some sober morning before breakfast, and write you a sober answer, with the sober sum which will then be due from, dear Sir, fu' or fasting, yours sincerely,

R. B.

* See the whole of this first epistle to Graham of Fintry, vol. i. p. 145.

No. CLXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Ellisland, *16th August*, 1788.

I am in a fine disposition, my honoured friend, to send you an elegiac epistle ; and want only genius to make it quite Shenstonian :—

"Why droops my heart with fancied woes forlorn ?
Why sinks my soul beneath each wintry sky ?"

My increasing cares in this, as yet, strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children ; I could indulge these reflections, till my humour should ferment into the most acid chagrin that would corrode the very thread of life.

To counterwork these baneful feelings, I have sat down to write to you ; as I declare upon my soul I always find *that* the most sovereign balm for my wounded spirit.

I was yesterday at Mr. Miller's to dinner, for the first time. My reception was quite to my mind : from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two, *impromptu.* She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present. My suffrage, as a professional man, was expected : I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me, ye, my adored household gods, independence of spirit and integrity of soul ! In the course of conversation, "Johnson's Musical Museum," a collection of Scottish songs with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning,

"Raving winds around her blowing." †

The air was much admired : the lady of the house asked me whose were the words. "Mine, Madam — they are indeed my very best verses;" she took not the smallest notice of them ! The old Scottish proverb says well, "King's caff is better than ither folks' corn." I was going to make a New Testament quotation about "casting pearls," but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste.

After all that has been said on the other side of the question, man is by no means a happy creature. I do not speak of the selected few, favoured by partial heaven, whose souls are tuned to gladness amid riches and honours, and prudence and wisdom. I speak of the neglected many, whose nerves, whose sinews, whose days are sold to the minions of fortune.

If I thought you had never seen it, I would transcribe

† See vol. i. p. 137.

for you a stanza of an old Scottish ballad, called "The Life and Age of Man;" beginning thus:—

"'Twas in the sixteen hunder year
Of God and fifty-three
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie."

I had an old grand-uncle, with whom my mother lived awhile in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died; during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of "The Life and Age of Man."*

It is this way of thinking, it is these melancholy truths, that make religion so precious to the poor, miserable children of men. If it is a mere phantom, existing only in the heated imagination of enthusiasm—

"What truth on earth so precious as the lie!"

My idle reasonings sometimes make me a little sceptical, but the necessities of my heart always give the cold philosophisings the lie. Who looks for the heart weaned from earth; the soul affianced to her God; the correspondence fixed with heaven; the pious supplication and devout thanksgiving, constant as the vicissitudes of even and morn; who thinks to meet with them in the court, the palace, in the glare of public life? No: to find them in their precious importance and divine efficacy, we must search among the obscure recesses of disappointment, affliction, poverty, and distress.

I am sure, dear Madam, you are now more than pleased with the length of my letters. I return to Ayrshire middle of next week: and it quickens my pace to think that there will be a letter from you waiting me there. I must be here again very soon for my harvest.

R. B.

No. CLXVII.

TO MR. JOHN BEUGO, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, *September* 9, 1788.

My Dear Sir,

There is not in Edinburgh above the number of the Graces whose letters would have given me so much pleasure as yours of the 3rd instant, which only reached me yesternight.

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called social communication, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting. Prose they only know in graces, prayers, &c., and the value of these they estimate, as they do their plaiding webs—by the ell! As for the Muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as a poet. For my old capricious but good-natured hussy of a Muse—

"By banks of Nith I sat and wept
When Coila I thought on,
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon."

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my "darling Jean," and then I, at lucid intervals, throw my horny fist across my be-cobwebbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning-wheel.

I will send you the "Fortunate Shepherdess" as soon as I return to Ayrshire, for there I keep it with other precious treasure. I shall send it by a careful hand, as I would not for anything it should be mislaid or lost. I do not wish to serve you from any benevolence, or other grave Christian virtue; 'tis purely a selfish gratification of my own feeling whenever I think of you.

You do not tell me if you are going to be married. Depend upon it, if you do not make some foolish choice, it will be a very great improvement upon the dish of life. I can speak from experience, though, God knows, my choice was as random as blind-man's buff. . . . .

If your better functions would give you leisure to write to me, I should be extremely happy; that is to say, if you neither keep nor look for a regular correspondence. I hate the idea of being obliged to write a letter. I sometimes write a friend twice a week, at other times once a quarter.

I am exceedingly pleased with your fancy in making the author you mention place a map of Iceland instead of his portrait before his works:* 'twas a glorious idea.

Could you conveniently do me one thing?—whenever you finish any head, I should like to have a proof copy of it. I might tell you a long story about your fine genius; but, as what every body knows cannot have escaped you I shall not say one syllable about it.

If you see Mr. Nasmyth, remember me to him most respectfully, as he both loves and deserves respect; though, if he would pay less respect to the mere carcase of greatness, I should think him much nearer perfection.

R. B.

* See the note to the poem, "Man was made to Mourn," v. i. p. 24.

† An allusion to Creech the bookseller.

No. CLXVIII.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq., OF FINTRY.

ENCLOSING A POETICAL EPISTLE.*

ELLISLAND, 10*th September*, 1788.

SIR,

THE scrapes and premunires into which our indiscretions and follies, in the ordinary constitution of things, often bring us, are bad enough; but it is peculiarly hard that a man's virtues should involve him in disquiet, and the very goodness of his heart cause the persecution of his peace. You, Sir, have patronized and befriended me, not by barren compliments, which merely fed my vanity, or little marks of notice, which perhaps only encumbered me more in the awkwardness of my native rusticity—but by being my persevering friend in real life: and now, as if your continued benevolence had given me a prescriptive right, I am going again to trouble you with my importunities.

Your Honourable Board some time ago gave me my Excise commission, which I regard as my sheet-anchor in life. My farm, now that I have tried it a little, though I think it will in time be a saving bargain, yet does by no means promise to be such a pennyworth as I was taught to expect. It is in the last stage of worn-out poverty, and it will take some time before it pays the rent. I might have had cash to supply the deficiencies of these hungry years; but I have a younger brother and three sisters on a farm in Ayrshire, and it took all my surplus over what I thought necessary for my farming capital, to save not only the comfort, but the very existence of that fireside circle from impending destruction. This was done before I took the farm; and rather than abstract my money from my brother—a circumstance which would ruin him—I will resign the farm, and enter immediately into the service of your Honours. But I am embarked now in the farm; I have commenced married man; and I am determined to stand by the lease till resistless necessity compels me to quit the ground.

There is one way by which I might be enabled to extricate myself from this embarrassment—a scheme which I hope and am certain is in your power to effectuate. I live here, Sir, in the very centre of a country Excise division; the present officer lately lived on a farm which he rented, in my nearest neighbourhood; and as the gentleman, owing to some legacies, is quite opulent, a removal could do him no manner of injury: and on a month's warning to give me a little time to look again over my instructions, I would not be afraid to enter on business. I do not know the name of his division, as I have not yet got acquainted with any of the Dumfries Excise people; but his own name is Leonard Smith. It would suit me to enter on it beginning of next summer; but I shall be in Edinburgh to wait upon you about the affair, sometime in the ensuing winter.

When I think how and on what I have written to you, Sir, I shudder at my own *hardiesse*. Forgive me, Sir, I have told you my situation. If asking anything less could possibly have done, I would not have asked so much.

If I were in the service, it would likewise favour my poetical schemes. I am thinking of something in the rural way of the drama kind. Originality of character is, I think, the most striking beauty in that species of composition, and my wanderings in the way of my business would be vastly favourable to my picking up original traits of human nature.

I again, Sir, earnestly beg your forgiveness for this letter. I have done violence to my own feelings in writing it.

> "If I in aught have done amiss,
> Impute it not!"

My thoughts on this business, as usual with me when my mind is burdened, vented themselves in the enclosed verses, which I have taken the liberty to inscribe to you.

You, Sir, have the power to bless; but the only claim I have to your friendly offices is my having already been the object of your goodness, which [seems much like] producing my debt instead of my discharge.

I am sure I go on Scripture grounds in this affair, for I "ask in faith, nothing doubting;" and for the true Scripture reason too, because I have the fullest conviction that "my benefactor is good."

I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

* See "Epistle to Mr. Graham," vol. i. p. 145.

No. CLXIX.

TO MRS. ROBERT BURNS, MAUCHLINE.

ELLISLAND, *Friday*, 12*th September*, 1788.

MY DEAR LOVE,

I RECEIVED your kind letter with a pleasure which no letter but one from you could have given me. I dreamed of you the whole night last; but alas! I fear it will be three weeks yet, ere I can hope for the happiness of seeing you. My harvest is going on. I have some to cut down still, but I put in two stacks to-day, so I 'm as tired as a dog.

You might get one of Gilbert's sweet milk cheeses,

and send it to . . . . On second thoughts, I believe you had best get the half of Gilbert's web of table linen, and make it up; tho' I think it damnable dear, but it is no outlaid money to us, you know. I have just now consulted my old landlady about table linen, and she thinks I may have the best for two shillings per yard; so after all, let it alone until I return; and some day next week I will be in Dumfries, and will ask the price there. I expect your new gowns will be very forward, or ready to make, against I be home to get the baiveridge. I have written my long-thought-on letter to Mr. Graham, the Commissioner of Excise; and have sent sheetful of Poetry besides. Now I talk of poetry, I had . . . . strathspey among my hands to make verses to, for Johnson's Collection, which I . . . .*

R. B.

No. CLXX.

TO MISS MARGARET CHALMERS, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES,
September 16, 1788.

WHERE are you? and how are you? and is Lady Mackenzie recovering her health? for I have had but one solitary letter from you. I will not think you have forgot me, Madam; and, for my part—

> "When thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
> Skill part from my right hand!"

"My heart is not of that rock, nor my soul careless as that sea." I do not make my progress among mankind as a bowl does among its fellows—rolling through the crowd without bearing away any mark or impression, except where they hit in hostile collision.

I am here, driven in with my harvest folks by bad weather; and as you and your sister once did me the honour of interesting yourselves much *à l'egard de moi*, I sit down to beg the continuation of your goodness. I can truly say that, all the exterior of life apart, I never saw two whose esteem flattered the nobler feelings of my soul—I will not say more, but so much, as Lady Mackenzie and Miss Chalmers. When I think of you—hearts the best, minds the noblest of human kind, unfortunate even in the shades of life—when I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost anybody I meet with in eight years—when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child! If ever you honoured me with a place in your esteem, I trust I can now plead more desert. I am secure against that crushing grip of iron poverty, which, alas! is less or more fatal to the native worth and purity of, I fear, the noblest souls; and a late important step in my life has kindly taken me out of the way of those ungrateful iniquities, which, however overlooked in fashionable licence, or varnished in fashionable phrase, are indeed but lighter and deeper shades of VILLAINY.

Shortly after my last return to Ayrshire, I married "my Jean." This was not in consequence of the attachment of romance, perhaps; but I had a long and much loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county. Mrs. Burns believes, as firmly as her creed, that I am *le plus bel esprit et le plus honnête homme* in the universe; although she scarcely ever in her life, except the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the Psalms of David in metre, spent five minutes together on either prose or verse. I must except, also, from this last a certain late publication of Scots poems, which she has perused very devoutly; and all the ballads in the country, as she has (O the partial lover! you will cry) the finest "wood note wild" I ever heard. I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have the honour of a share in your best wishes.† She is still at Mauchline, as I am building my house; for this hovel that I shelter in, while occasionally here, is pervious to every blast that blows and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect, but I believe, in time, it may be a saving bargain. You will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside *éclat*, and bind every day after my reapers.

To save me from that horrid situation of at any time going down, in a loosing bargain of a farm, to misery, I have taken my Excise instructions, and have my commission in my pocket for any emergency of fortune. If I could set all before your view, whatever disrespect you, in common with the world, have for this business, I know you would approve of my idea.

I will make no apology, dear Madam, for this egotistic detail; I know you and your sister will be interested in every circumstance of it. What signify the silly, idle

* The original of the above is possessed by Mr. Andrew Nicolson, Dumfries. It is, however, very much damaged, and the latter portion is torn away.

† No letter to her by the poet after this has been preserved.

gewgaws of wealth, or the ideal trumpery of greatness! When fellow-partakers of the same nature fear the same God, have the same benevolence of heart, the same nobleness of soul, the same detestation at every thing dishonest, and the same scorn at every thing unworthy—if they are not in the dependence of absolute beggary, in the name of common sense are they not EQUALS? And if the bias, the instinctive bias of their souls run the same way, why may they not be FRIENDS?

When I may have an opportunity of sending you this, Heaven only knows. Shenstone says, "When one is confined idle within doors by bad weather, the best antidote against *ennui* is to read the letters of, or write to, one's friends;" in that case then, if the weather continues thus, I may scrawl you half a quire.

I very lately—to wit, since harvest began—wrote a poem, not in imitation, but in the manner of Pope's Moral Epistles. It is only a short essay, just to try the strength of my Muse's pinion in that way. I will send you a copy of it, when once I have heard from you. I have likewise been laying the foundation of some pretty large poetic works; how the superstructure will come on, I leave to that great maker and marrer of projects—TIME. Johnson's collection of Scots songs is going on in the third volume; and, of consequence, finds me a consumpt for a great deal of idle metre. One of the most tolerable things I have done in that way is two stanzas that I made to an air a musical gentleman of my acquaintance composed for the anniversary of his wedding-day, which happens on the 7th of November. Take it as follows:—

"The day returns—my bosom burns—
The blissful day we twa did meet," &c.*

I give over this letter for shame. If I should be seized with a scribbling fit before this goes away, I shall make it another letter; and then you may allow your patience a week's respite between the two. I have not room for more than the old, kind, hearty farewell!

To make some amends, *mes chères Mesdames*, for dragging you on to this second sheet; and to relieve a little the tiresomeness of my unstudied and uncorrectable prose, I shall transcribe you some of my late poetic bagatelles; though I have, these eight or ten months, done very little that way. One day, in a hermitage on the banks of the Nith, belonging to a gentleman in my neighbourhood, who is so good as give me a key at pleasure, I wrote as follows; supposing myself the sequestered, venerable inhabitant of the lonely mansion:—

"Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed," &c.†

R. B.

* See vol. i. p. 143.

† See vol. i. pp. 142, 148.

No. CLXXI.

TO MR. MORISON, WRIGHT, MAUCHLINE.‡

ELLISLAND, *September* 22, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

NECESSITY obliges me to go into my new house even before it be plastered. I will inhabit the one end until the other is finished. About three weeks more, I think, will at farthest be my time beyond which I cannot stay in this present house. If ever you wished to deserve the blessing of him that was ready to perish; if ever you were in a situation that a little kindness would have rescued you from many evils; if ever you hope to find rest in future states of untried being—get these matters of mine ready. My servant will be out in the beginning of next week for the clock. My compliments to Mrs. Morison. I am, after all my tribulation, dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. CLXXII.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

ELLISLAND, 23*rd September*, 1788.

SIR,

THOUGH I am scarce able to hold up my head with this fashionable influenza, which is just now the rage hereabouts, yet with half a spark of life, I would thank you for your most generous favour of the 14th, which, owing to my infrequent calls at the post-office in the hurry of harvest, came only to hand yesternight. I assure you, my ever-honoured Sir, I read it with eyes brimful of other drops than those of anguish. Oh, what means of happiness the Author of goodness has put in their hands to whom he has given the power to bless!—and what real happiness has he given to those on whom he has likewise bestowed kind, generous, benevolent dispositions! Did you know, Sir, from how many fears and forebodings the friendly assurance of your patronage and protection has freed me, it would be some reward for your goodness.

I am cursed with a melancholy prescience, which makes me the veriest coward in life. There is not any exertion which I would not attempt, rather than be in that horrid

‡ Morison, perhaps father of Mary Morison (see LIFE), a cabinet-maker. The letter refers to some household furniture which the poet had ordered.

situation—to be ready to call on the mountains to fall on me, and the hills to cover me from the presence of a haughty landlord, or his still more haughty underling, to whom I owed—what I could not pay. My muse, too, the circumstance that, after my domestic comfort, is by far the dearest to my soul, to have it in my power to cultivate her acquaintance to advantage—in short, Sir, you have, like the great Being whose image you so richly bear, made a creature happy, who had no other claim to your goodness than his necessity, and who can make you no other return than his grateful acknowledgment.

My farm, I think I am certain, will in the long-run be an object for me; and as I rent it the first three years something under . . . , I will be able to weather by a twelvemonth, or perhaps more; though it would make me set fortune more at defiance, if it can be in your power to grant my request, as I mentioned, in the beginning of next summer. I was thinking that, as I am only a little more than five miles from Dumfries, I might perhaps officiate there, if any of these officers could be removed with more propriety than Mr. Smith; but besides the monstrous inconvenience of it to me, I could not bear to injure a poor fellow by outing him to make way for myself; to a wealthy son of good-fortune like Smith, the injury is imaginary where the propriety of your rules admits.

Had I been well, I intended to have troubled you further with a description of my soil and plan of farming; but business will call me to town about February next. I hope then to have the honour of assuring you *in propriâ personâ*, how much and how truly I am, Sir, your deeply indebted and ever-grateful, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CLXXIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP,

MOREHAM MAINS, HADDINGTON.

MAUCHLINE, *27th September*, 1788.

I HAVE received twins, dear Madam, more than once; but scarcely ever with more pleasure than when I received yours of the 12th instant. To make myself understood; I had wrote to Mr. Graham, inclosing my poem addressed to him, and the same post which favoured me with yours brought me an answer from him. It was dated the very day he had received mine; and I am quite at a loss to say whether it was more polite or kind.

Your criticisms, my honoured benefactress, are truly the work of a friend. They are not the blasting depredations of a canker-toothed, caterpillar critic; nor are they the fair statement of cold impartiality, balancing with unfeeling exactitude the *pro* and *con* of an author's merits; they are the judicious observations of animated friendship, selecting the beauties of the piece. I have just arrived from Nithsdale, and will be here a fortnight. I was on horseback this morning by three o'clock; for between my wife and my farm is just forty-six miles. As I jogged on in the dark, I was taken with a poetic fit, as follows:—

MRS. FERGUSON OF CRAIGDARROCH'S LAMENTATION FOR THE DEATH OF HER SON; AN UNCOMMONLY PROMISING YOUTH OF EIGHTEEN OR NINETEEN YEARS OF AGE

"Fate gave the word—the arrow sped,
And pierced my darling's heart," &c.*

You will not send me your poetic rambles, but, you see, I am no niggard of mine. I am sure your impromptus give me double pleasure; what falls from your pen can be neither unentertaining in itself, nor indifferent to me.

The one fault you found is just; but I cannot please myself in an emendation.

What a life of solicitude is the life of a parent! You interested me much in your young couple. I suppose it is not any of the ladies I have seen.

I would not take my folio paper for this epistle, and now I repent it. I am so jaded with my dirty long journey that I was afraid to drawl into the essence of dulness with anything larger than a quarto, and so I must leave out another rhyme of this morning's manufacture.

I will pay the sapientipotent George most cheerfully, to hear from you ere I leave Ayrshire.

I have the honour to be, dear Madam, your much obliged, and most respectful, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CLXXIV

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

MAUCHLINE, *1st October*, 1788.

I HAVE been here in this country about three days, and all that time my chief reading has been the "Address to Lochlomond" you were so obliging as to send to me.† Were I impanelled one of the author's jury, to determine his criminality respecting the sin of poesy, my verdict should be "Guilty! A poet of nature's making!" It is an excellent method of improvement, and what I believe every poet does, to place some favourite classic

* See vol. i. p. 146.

† A poem written by one of the masters of the High School, Edinburgh, afterwards Dr. Crirle, minister of Dalton, Dumfriesshire.

author in his own walks of study and composition before him as a model. Though your author had not mentioned the name, I could have, at half a glance, guessed his model to be Thomson. Will my brother-poet forgive me, if I venture to hint that his imitation of that immortal bard is in two or three places rather more servile than such a genius as his required :—*e. g.*,

"To soothe the maddening passions all to peace."—Address.

"To soothe the throbbing passions into peace."—Thomson.

I think the "Address" is in simplicity, harmony, and elegance of versification, fully equal to the "Seasons." Like Thomson, too, he has looked into nature for himself: you meet with no copied description. One particular criticism I made at first reading; in no one instance has he said too much. He never flags in his progress, but, like a true poet of nature's making, kindles in his course. His beginning is simple and modest, as if distrustful of the strength of his pinion; only, I do not altogether like—

"Truth,
The soul of every song that 's nobly great."

Fiction is the soul of many a song that is nobly great. Perhaps I am wrong: this may be but a prose criticism. Is not the phrase, in line 7, page 6, "Great lake," too much vulgarized by every-day language for so sublime a poem?

"Great mass of waters, theme for nobler song,"

is perhaps no emendation. His enumeration of a comparison with other lakes is at once harmonious and poetic. Every reader's ideas must sweep the

"Winding margin of an hundred miles."

The perspective that follows mountains blue—the imprisoned billows beating in vain—the wooded isles—the digressions on the yew-tree—"Benlomond's lofty, cloud-envelop'd head," &c., are beautiful. A thunder-storm is a subject which has been often tried, yet our poet in his grand picture has interjected a circumstance, so far as I know, entirely original :—

"The gloom
Deep seam'd with frequent streaks of moving fire."

In his preface to the Storm, "the glens how dark between," is noble highland landscape! The "rain ploughing the red mould," too, is beautifully fancied. "Benlomond's lofty, pathless top," is a good expression; and the surrounding view from it is truly great: the

"silver mist,
Beneath the beaming sun,"

is well described; and here he has contrived to enliven his poem with a little of that passion which bids fair, I think, to usurp the modern Muses altogether. I know not how far this episode is a beauty upon the whole, but the swain's wish to carry "some faint idea of the vision bright," to entertain her "partial listening ear," is a pretty thought. But, in my opinion, the most beautiful passages in the whole poem are the fowls crowding, in wintry frosts, to Lochlomond's "hospitable flood;" their wheeling round, their lighting, mixing, diving, &c.; and the glorious description of the sportsman. This last is equal to any thing in the "Seasons." The idea of "the floating tribes far distant seen, all glistering to the moon," provoking his eye as he is obliged to leave them, is a noble ray of poetic genius. "The howling winds," the "hideous roar" of "the white cascades," are all in the same style.

I forget that while I am thus holding forth with the heedless warmth of an enthusiast, I am perhaps tiring you with nonsense. I must, however, mention that the last verse of the sixteenth page is one of the most elegant compliments I have ever seen. I must likewise notice that beautiful paragraph beginning "The gleaming lake," &c. I dare not go into the particular beauties of the last two paragraphs, but they are admirably fine, and truly Ossianic.

I must beg your pardon for this lengthened scrawl. I had no idea of it when I began. I should like to know who the author is; but, whoever he be, please present him with my grateful thanks for the entertainment he has afforded me.

A friend of mine desired me to commission for him two books, "Letters on the Religion essential to Man," a book you sent me before; and "The World Unmasked, or the Philosopher the greatest Cheat." Send me them by the first opportunity. The Bible you sent me is truly elegant; I only wish it had been in two volumes.

R. B.

No. CLXXV.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE STAR."*

November 8, 1788.

Sir,

Notwithstanding the opprobrious epithets with which some of our philosophers and gloomy sectarians have branded our nature—the principle of universal selfishness, the proneness to all evil, they have given us; still, the detestation in which inhumanity to the distressed and insolence to the fallen are held by all mankind, shows that they are not natives of the human heart. Even the unhappy partner of our kind who is undone, the

* One of the editors of the *Star* at this time was John Mayne, author of "The Siller Gun." See Life.

bitter consequence of his follies or his crimes, who but sympathizes with the miseries of this ruined profligate brother? We forget the injuries, and feel for the man.

I went, last Wednesday, to my parish church, most cordially to join in grateful acknowledgment to the AUTHOR OF ALL GOOD, for the consequent blessings of the glorious Revolution.* To that auspicious event we owe no less than our liberties, civil and religious: to it we are likewise indebted for the present Royal Family; the ruling features of whose administration have ever been mildness to the subject, and tenderness of his rights.

Bred and educated in Revolution principles, the principles of reason and common sense, it could not be any silly political prejudice which made my heart revolt at the harsh, abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman mentioned the House of Stuart, and which, I am afraid, was too much the language of the day. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils, without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils; and we may bless God for all his goodness to us as a nation, without, at the same time, cursing a few ruined, powerless exiles, who only harboured ideas, and made attempts, that most of us would have done, had we been in their situation.

"The bloody and tyrannical House of Stuart" may be said with propriety and justice, when compared with the present royal family, and the sentiments of our days; but is there no allowance to be made for the manners of the times? Were the royal contemporaries of the Stuarts more attentive to their subjects' rights? Might not the epithets of "bloody and tyrannical" be, with at least equal justice, applied to the House of Tudor, of York, or any other of their predecessors?

The simple state of the case, Sir, seems to be this:—At that period, the science of government, the knowledge of the true relation between king and subject, was, like other sciences and other knowledge, just in its infancy, emerging from dark ages of ignorance and barbarity.

The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation and the rights of subjects.

In this contest between prince and people, the consequence of that light of science which had lately dawned over Europe, the monarch of France, for example, was victorious over the struggling liberties of his people: with us, luckily, the monarch failed, and his unwarrantable pretensions fell a sacrifice to our rights and happiness. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the justling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine; but, likewise happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there.

The Stuarts have been condemned and laughed at for the folly and impracticability of their attempts in 1715 and 1745. That they failed, I bless God; but cannot join in the ridicule against them. Who does not know that the abilities or defects of leaders and commanders are often hidden until put to the touchstone of exigency; and that there is a caprice of fortune, an omnipotence in particular accidents and conjunctures of circumstances, which exalt us as heroes or brand us as madmen, just as they are for or against us?

Man, Mr. Publisher, is a strange, weak, inconsistent being: who would believe, Sir, that in this our Augustan age of liberality and refinement—while we seem so justly sensible and jealous of our rights and liberties, and animated with such indignation against the very memory of those who would have subverted them—that a certain people under our national protection should complain, not against our monarch and a few favourite advisers, but against our WHOLE LEGISLATIVE BODY, for similar oppression, and almost in the very same terms, as our forefathers did of the House of Stuart? I will not, I cannot, enter into the merits of the cause; but I dare say the American Congress, of 1776, will be allowed to have been as able and enlightened as the English Convention was in 1688; and that their posterity will celebrate the centenary of their deliverance from us, as duly and sincerely as we do ours from the oppressive measures of the wrong-headed House of Stuart.

To conclude, Sir; let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton (and particularly every Scotsman), who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers.

R. B.

* This was a sermon preached on the Assembly's Thanksgiving Day, November 5, 1788, by the Rev. Mr. Kilpatrick, to celebrate the accession of King William to the throne.

No. CLXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP,

CARE OF WM. KERR, ESQ., POST OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, 13*th November*, 1788.

MADAM,

I HAD the very great pleasure of dining at Dunlop yesterday. Men are said to flatter women because they are weak; if it is so, poets must be weaker

still; for Misses Rachel and Keith, and Miss Georgina M'Kay, with their flattering attentions and artful compliments, absolutely turned my head. I own they did not lard me over as a poet does his patron, or still more his patroness, nor did they sugar me up as a Cameronian preacher does J—s—s C——st; but they so intoxicated me with their sly insinuations and delicate inuendos of compliment, that, if it had not been for a lucky recollection, how much additional weight and lustre your good opinion and friendship must give me in that circle, I had certainly looked on myself as a person of no small consequence. I dare not say one word how much I was charmed with the Major's friendly welcome, elegant manner, and acute remark, lest I should be thought to balance my orientalisms of applause over against the finest quey* in Ayrshire, which he made me a present of to help and adorn my farm-stock. As it was on Hallow-day, I am determined, annually as that day returns, to decorate her horns with an ode of gratitude to the family of Dunlop.

The songs in the second volume of the Museum, marked D. are Dr. Blacklock's; but, as I am sorry to say, they are far short of his other works. I, who only know the cyphers of them all, shall never let it be known. Those marked T. are the work of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler; a mortal who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God and Solomon-the-son-of-Dávid; yet that same unknown, drunken mortal is author and compiler of three-fourth's of Elliot's pompous *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Those marked Z. I have given to the world as old verses to their respective tunes; but in fact, of a good many of them, little more than the Chorus is ancient; though there is no reason for telling every body this piece of intelligence. Next letter I write you, I shall send one or two sets of verses I intend for Johnson's third volume.

What you mention of the Thanksgiving day is inspiration from above. Is it not remarkable, odiously remarkable, that though manners are more civilized, and the rights of mankind better understood, by an Augustan Century's improvement, yet in this very reign of heavenly Hanoverianism, and almost in this very year, an empire beyond the Atlantic has its REVOLUTION too, and for the very same maladministration and legislative misdemeanours in the illustrious and sapientipotent Family of H—— as was complained of in the "tyrannical and bloody house of Stuart?"

So soon as I know of your arrival at Dunlop, I shall take the first conveniency to dedicate a day, or perhaps two, to you and friendship, under the guarantee of the Major's hospitality. There will soon be threescore and ten miles of permanent distance between us; and now that your friendship and friendly correspondence is entwisted with the heart-strings of my enjoyment of life I must indulge myself in a festive day of "The feast of reason and the flow of soul." I have the honour to be, Madam, your grateful humble servant,

R. B.

* Heifer.

No. CLXXVII.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER.

MAUCHLINE, *November* 15, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE sent you two more songs. If you have got any tunes, or anything to correct, please send them by return of the carrier.

I can easily see, my dear friend, that you will very probably have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucratively in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country; and I am certain posterity will look on themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. Be not in a hurry; let us go on correctly, and your name shall be immortal.

I am preparing a flaming preface for your third volume. I see every day new musical publications advertised; but what are they? Gaudy, hunted butterflies of a day, and then vanish for ever: but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time.

Have you never a fair goddess that leads you a wild-goose chase of amorous devotion? Let me know a few of her qualities, such as whether she be rather black, or fair; plump, or thin; short, or tall, &c.; and choose your air, and I shall task my muse to celebrate her.

R. B.

No. CLXXVIII.

TO DR. BLACKLOCK, EDINBURGH.

MAUCHLINE, *November* 15, 1788.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,

As I hear nothing of your motions, but that you are, or were, out of town, I do not know where this may find you, or whether it will find you at all. I wrote you a long letter, dated from the land of Matrimony, in June; but either it had not found you, or, what I dread more, it found you and Mrs. Blacklock in too

precarious a state of health and spirits to take notice of an idle packet.

I have done many little things for Johnson, since I had the pleasure of seeing you; and I have finished one piece, in the way of Pope's "Moral Epistles;" but, from your silence, I have every thing to fear, so I have only sent you two melancholy things,* and I tremble lest they should too well suit the tone of your present feelings.

In a fortnight I move, bag and baggage, to Nithsdale; till then, my direction is at this place; after that period it will be at Ellisland, near Dumfries. It would extremely oblige me, were it but half a line, to let me know how you are, and where you are. Can I be indifferent to the fate of a man to whom I owe so much? A man whom I not only esteem, but venerate.

My warmest good wishes and most respectful compliments to Mrs. Blacklock, and Miss Johnson, if she is with you.

I cannot conclude without telling you that I am more and more pleased with the step I took respecting "my Jean." Two things, from my happy experience, I set down as apophthegms in life. A wife's head is immaterial, compared with her heart; and—"Virtue's (for wisdom, what poet pretends to it?) ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Adieu!

R. B.

No. CLXXIX.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, Esq., DRUMLANRIG.

ENCLOSING A SONG.†

SANQUHAR, 26*th November*, 1788.

SIR,

I WRITE you this and the enclosed, literally *en passant*, for I am just baiting on my way to Ayrshire. I have philosophy or pride enough to support me with unwounded indifference against the neglect of my more dull superiors, the merely rank and file of noblesse and gentry—nay, even to keep my vanity quite sober under the larding of their compliments; but from those who are equally distinguished by their rank and character—those who bear the true elegant impressions of the Great Creator on the richest materials—their little notices and attentions are to me among the first of earthly enjoyments. The honour thou didst my fugitive pieces in requesting copies of them is so highly flattering to my feelings and poetic ambition, that I could not resist even this half opportunity of scrawling off for you the enclosed, as a small but honest testimony how truly and gratefully I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply obliged humble servant,

R. B.

* The songs are "A mother's lament for the loss of her son" (see vol. i. p. 146), and the song beginning "The lazy mist hangs from the brow of the hill" (see vol. i. p. 147).

† "O were I on Parnassus hill."—See vol. i. p. 142.

No. CLXXX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 17*th December*, 1788.

MY DEAR HONOURED FRIEND,

YOURS, dated Edinburgh, which I have just read, makes me very unhappy. "Almost blind and wholly deaf," are melancholy news of human nature: but when told of a much-loved and honoured friend, they carry misery in the sound. Goodness on your part, and gratitude on mine, began a tie which has gradually entwisted itself among the dearest chords of my bosom, and I tremble at the omens of your late and present ailing habit and shattered health. You miscalculate matters widely, when you forbid my waiting on you, lest it should hurt my worldly concerns. My small scale of farming is exceedingly more simple and easy, than what you have lately seen at Moreham Mains. But, be that as it may, the heart of the man and the fancy of the poet are the two grand considerations for which I live: if miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul immortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods and picking up grubs; not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards, creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time. If you continue so deaf, I am afraid a visit will be no great pleasure to either of us; but if I hear you are got so well again as to be able to relish conversation, look you to it, Madam, for I will make my threatening good. I am to be at the New-year-day fair of Ayr; and, by all that is sacred in the world, friend, I *will* come and see you. . . . .

Your meeting, which you so well describe, with your old schoolfellow and friend, was truly interesting. Out upon the ways of the world! They spoil these "social offspring of the heart." Two veterans of the "men of the world" would have met with little more heart-workings than two old hacks worn out on the road. Apropos, is not the Scotch phrase, "Auld lang syne," exceedingly expressive? There is an old song and tune which has often thrilled through my soul. You know I am an enthusiast in old Scotch songs. I shall give you the

verses on the other sheet, as I suppose Mr. Kerr* will save you this postage.

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?" &c.†

Light be the turf on the breast of the Heaven-inspired poet who composed this glorious fragment! There is more of the fire of native genius in it than in half-a-dozen of modern English Bacchanalians! Now I am on my hobby-horse, I cannot help inserting two other old stanzas, which please me mightily:—

"Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie," &c.‡

No. CLXXXI.

TO MR. WILLIAM CRUIKSHANK, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 1788.

I HAVE not room, my dear friend, to answer all the particulars of your last kind letter. I shall be in Edinburgh on some business very soon; and as I shall be two days, or perhaps three, in town, we shall discuss matters *vivâ voce*. My knee, I believe, will never be entirely well: and an unlucky fall this winter has made it still worse. I well remember the circumstance you allude to, respecting Creech's opinion of Mr. Nicol; but, as the first gentleman owes me still about fifty pounds, I dare not meddle in the affair.

It gave me a very heavy heart to read such accounts of the consequences of your quarrel with that puritanic, rotten-hearted, hell-commissioned scoundrel, Adam. If, notwithstanding your unprecedented industry in public, and your irreproachable conduct in private life, he still has you so much in his power, what ruin may he not bring on some others I could name?

Many and happy returns of seasons to you, with your dearest and worthiest friend, and the lovely little pledge of your happy union. May the great Author of life, and of every enjoyment that can render life delightful, make her that comfortable blessing to you both, which you so ardently wish for, and which, allow me to say, you so well deserve! Glance over the foregoing verses,§ and let me have your blots.

R. B.

* Mr. Kerr was postmaster in Edinburgh.
† See vol. ii. p. 58.
‡ See vol. i. p. 150.
§ Lines written in Friar's Carse Hermitage.

No. CLXXXII.

TO MR. JOHN TENNANT, AUCHENBEY.

CARE OF MR. JOHN ROBB, INNKEEPER, AYR.

December 22, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

I YESTERDAY tried my cask of whisky for the first time, and I assure you it does you great credit. It will bear five waters, strong, or six, ordinary toddy. The whisky of this country is a most rascally liquor; and, by consequence, only drunk by the most rascally part of the inhabitants. I am persuaded, if you once get a footing here, you might do a great deal of business, in the way of consumpt: and should you commence Distiller again, this is the native barley country. I am ignorant if, in your present way of dealing, you would think it worth while to extend your business so far as this country side. I write you this on the account of an accident, which I must take the merit of having partly designed too. A neighbour of mine, a John Currie, miller in Carse-mill—a man who is, in a word, a good man, a "very" good man, even for a £500 bargain—he and his wife were in my house the time I broke open the cask. They keep a country public-house and sell a great deal of foreign spirits, but all along thought that whisky would have degraded their house. They were perfectly astonished at my whisky, both for its taste and strength; and, by their desire, I write you to know if you could supply them with liquor of an equal quality, and at what price. Please write me by first post, and direct to me at Ellisland, near Dumfries. If you could take a jaunt this way yourself, I have a spare spoon, knife, and fork very much at your service. My compliments to Mrs. Tennant, and all the good folks in Glenconner and Barquharric. I am, most truly, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. CLXXXIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *New-year-day Morning*, 1789.

THIS, dear Madam, is a morning of wishes; and would to God that I came under the Apostle James's description! "The effectual, fervent prayer of a *righteous man* availeth much." In that case, Madam, you should "welcome in" a year full of blessings: everything that obstructs

or disturbs tranquillity and self-enjoyment should be removed, and every pleasure that frail Humanity can taste should be yours. I own myself so little a Presbyterian that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of Devotion, for breaking in on that habituated routine of life and thought, which is so apt to reduce our existence to a kind of instinct, or even sometimes, and with some minds, to a state very little superior to mere machinery.

This day; the first Sunday of May; a breezy, blue-skyed noon, some time about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end, of Autumn; these, time out of mind, have been with me a kind of holidays. Not like the sacramental, executioner-face of a Kilmarnock communion; but to laugh or cry, be cheerful or pensive, moral or devout, according to the mood and tense of the season and myself. I believe I owe this to that glorious paper in the Spectator, "The Vision of Mirza;" a piece that struck my young fancy before I was capable of fixing an idea to a word of three syllables: "On the fifth day of the moon, which, according to the custom of my forefathers, I always *keep holy;* after having washed myself, and offered up my morning devotions, I ascended the high hill of Bagdat, in order to pass the rest of the day in meditation and prayer," &c.*

We know nothing, or next to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them; that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, makes no extraordinary impression. I have some favourite flowers in Spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the hare-bell, the foxglove, the wild-brier rose, the budding birk, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud, solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey-plover in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my dear friend, to what can this be owing? Are we a piece of machinery, that, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident? Or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to these proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature—and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave—these proofs that we deduct by dint of our own powers of observation. However respectable individuals in all ages have been, I have ever looked on Mankind in the lump to be nothing better than a foolish, headstrong, credulous, unthinking mob; and their universal belief has ever had extremely little weight with me. Still I am a very sincere believer in the Bible; but I am drawn by the conviction of a man, not by the halter of an ass.

Apropos to an ass, how do you like the following Apostrophe to Dulness, which I intend to interweave in "The Poet's Progress?"

> "O Dulness, portion of the truly blest!
> Calm, shelter'd haven of eternal rest!" &c.†

I have sketched two or three verses to you; but as a private opportunity offers immediately, I must defer transcribing them. A servant of mine goes to Ayrshire with this, but I shall write you by post. If I am to be so happy as to have it in my power to see you when I go to Ayr Fair, which I very much doubt, I will try to dine at Dunlop in the Wednesday of that week.

If it is good weather in the Fair-week, I shall try my utmost; for if I hit my aim aright, it will not be in my power in any given time again: Farewell!

R. B.

No. CLXXXIV.

TO DR. MOORE, LONDON.

Ellisland, near Dumfries,
4th January, 1789.

Sir,

As often as I think of writing to you, which has been three or four times every week these six months, it gives me something so like the idea of an ordinary-sized statue offering at a conversation with the Rhodian Colossus, that my mind misgives me, and the affair always miscarries somewhere between purpose and resolve. I have, at last, got some business with you, and business-letters are written by the style-book. I say my business is with you, Sir, for you never had any with me, except the business that benevolence has in the mansion of poverty.

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I know that a very great deal of my late *éclat* was owing to the singularity of my situation, and the honest prejudice of Scotsmen; but still, as I said in the preface of my first edition, I do look upon myself as having some pretensions from nature to the poetic character. I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude to learn the muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him "who forms the secret bias of the soul;" but I as firmly believe, that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains. At least I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put

* The exquisite paper referred to is by Addison.

† See vol. i. p. 115.

off to a very distant day, a day that may never arrive—but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour. Nature has given very few, if any, of the profession, the talents of shining in every species of composition. I shall try (for until trial it is impossible to know) whether she has qualified me to shine in any one. The worst of it is, by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses, in a good measure, the powers of critical discrimination. Here the best criterion I know is a friend—not only of abilities to judge, but with good nature enough, like a prudent teacher with a young learner, to praise perhaps a little more than is exactly just, lest the thin-skinned animal fall into that most deplorable of all poetic diseases—heart-breaking despondency of himself. Dare I, Sir, already immensely indebted to your goodness, ask the additional obligation of your being that friend to me? I enclose you an essay of mine, in a walk of poesy to me entirely new; I mean the epistle* addressed to R. G., Esq., or Robert Graham of Fintry, Esq., a gentleman of uncommon worth, to whom I lie under very great obligations. The story of the poem, like most of my poems, is connected with my own story, and to give you the one, I must give you something of the other. I cannot boast of Mr. Creech's ingenuous, fair dealing to me. He kept me hanging about Edinburgh, from 7th August, 1787, until the 13th April, 1788, before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs; nor had I got it even then, but for an angry letter I wrote him, which irritated his pride. I could—not "a tale"—but a detail "unfold;" but what am I that I should speak against the Lord's anointed Bailie of Edinburgh?

I believe I shall, in whole (£100 copy-right included), clear about £400, some little odds; and even part of this depends upon what the gentleman has yet to settle with me. I give you this information, because you did me the honour to interest yourself much in my welfare. I give you this information, but I give it to yourself only; for I am still much in the gentleman's mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him; God forbid I should! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business, if possible.

To give the rest of my story in brief: I have married "my Jean," and taken a farm. With the first step, I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last it is rather the reverse. I have a younger brother who supports my aged mother; another still younger brother, and three sisters in a farm. On my last return from Edinburgh, it cost me about £180 to save them from ruin. Not that I have lost so much; I only interposed between my brother and his impending fate by the loan of so much. I give myself no airs on this, for it was mere selfishness on my part: I was conscious that the wrong scale of the balance was pretty heavily charged, and I thought that throwing a little filial piety and fraternal affection into the scale in my favour might help to smooth matters at the "grand reckoning." There is still one thing would make my circumstances quite easy; I have an Excise officer's commission, and I live in the midst of a country division. My request to Mr. Graham, who is one of the Commissioners of Excise, was, if in his power, to procure me that division. If I were very sanguine, I might hope that some of my great patrons might procure me a Treasury warrant for supervisor, surveyor-general, &c. . . . .

Thus secure of a livelihood "to thee, sweet Poetry, delightful maid," I would consecrate my future days.

R. B.

* See vol. i. p. 115.

No. CLXXXV.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, *January* 6, 1789.

MANY happy returns of the season to you, my dear Sir! May you be comparatively happy up to your comparative worth among the sons of men; which wish would, I am sure, make you one of the most blest of the human race.

I do not know if passing a "Writer to the signet" be a trial of scientific merit, or a mere business of friends and interest. However it be, let me quote you my two favourite passages, which, though I have repeated them ten thousand times, still they rouse my manhood and steel my resolution like inspiration.

> "On Reason build resolve,
> That column of true majesty in man."—YOUNG.

> "Hear, Alfred, hero of the state,
> Thy genius heaven's high will declare;
> The triumph of the truly great
> Is never, never to despair!
> Is never to despair!"—MASQUE OF ALFRED.

I grant, you enter the lists of life to struggle for bread, business, notice, and distinction, in common with hundreds. But who are they? Men, like yourself, and of that aggregate body, your compeers, seven-tenths of them come short of your advantages, natural and accidental; while two of those that remain either neglect their parts, as flowers blooming in a desert, or mis-spend their strength, like a bull goring a bramble bush.

But, to change the theme; I am still catering for

Johnson's publication, and among others, I have brushed up the following old favourite song a little, with a view to your worship. I have only altered a word here and there; but if you like the humour of it, we shall think of a stanza or two to add to it:—

"Robin shure in hairst, I shure wi' him;
Fient a heuk had I, yet I stack by him," &c.*

R. B.

CLXXXVI.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, Esq., DRUMLANRIG.

ELLISLAND, *9th January*, 1789.

SIR,

A POET and a beggar are in so many points of view alike, that one might take them for the same individual under different designations; were it not that, though with a trifling poetic licence, poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold, that every beggar is a poet. In one particular, however, they remarkably agree: if you help either the one or the other to a mug of ale or the picking of a bone, they will willingly repay you with a song. This occurs to me at present, as I have just despatched a rib of J. Kilpatrick's Highlander,† a bargain for which I am indebted to you (in the style of our ballad-printers), "Five Excellent New Songs."

The enclosed is nearly my newest song, and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of its excellence. Two or three others which I have by me shall do themselves the honour to wait on your after leisure; petitioners for admittance into favour must not harass the condescension of their benefactor.

You see, Sir, what it is to patronize a poet. 'Tis like being a magistrate in Petty-borough; you do them the favour to preside in their council for one year, and your name bears the prefatory stigma of "Bailie" for life.

With, not the compliments, but the best wishes, the sincerest prayer of the season for you, that you may see many happy years with Mrs. M'Murdo and your family—two blessings, by the by, to which your rank does not entitle you, a loving wife and fine family being almost the only good things of this life to which the farm-house and cottage have an exclusive right—I have the honour to be, Sir, your much indebted and very humble servant,

R. B.

* See vol. ii. p. 19.

† Kilpatrick was a blacksmith. Burns alludes to a wedder which he had got through M'Murdo from Kilpatrick.

No. CLXXXVII.

TO PROFESSOR DUGALD STEWART.

SIR, ELLISLAND, 20*th January*, 1798.

THE enclosed sealed packet I sent to Edinburgh a few days after I had the happiness of meeting you in Ayrshire, but you were gone for the Continent. I have added a few more of my productions, those for which I am indebted to the Nithsdale Muses. The piece inscribed to R. G., Esq., is a copy of verses I sent Mr. Graham, of Fintry, accompanying a request for his assistance in a matter, to me, of very great moment. To that gentleman I am already doubly indebted, for deeds of kindness of serious import to my dearest interests, done in a manner grateful to the delicate feelings of sensibility. This poem is a species of composition new to me; but I do not intend it shall be my last essay of the kind, as you will see by the "Poet's Progress."‡ These fragments, if my design succeeds, are but a small part of the intended whole. I propose it shall be the work of my utmost exertions ripened by years: of course I do not wish it much known. The fragment, beginning "A little, upright, pert, tart," &c.,§ I have not shewn to man living, till now I send it you. It is the postulata, the axioms, the definition of a character, which, if it appear at all, shall be placed in a variety of lights. This particular part I send you merely as a sample of my hand at portrait-sketching; but lest idle conjecture should pretend to point out the original, please, let it be for your single, sole inspection.

Need I make any apology for this trouble to a gentleman who has treated me with such marked benevolence and peculiar kindness; who has entered into my interests with so much zeal, and on whose critical decisions I can so fully depend? A poet as I am by trade, these decisions are to me of the last consequence. My late transient acquaintance among some of the mere rank and file of greatness I resign with ease: but to the distinguished champions of genius and learning, I shall be ever ambitious of being known. The native genius and accurate discernment in Mr. Stewart's critical strictures, the justice (the iron justice, for he has no bowels of compassion for a poor poetic sinner) of Dr. Gregory's remarks, and the delicacy of Professor Dalzell's taste, I shall ever revere.

I shall be in Edinburgh some time next month. I have the honour to be, Sir, your highly obliged and very humble servant,

R. B.

‡ See vol. i. p. 114.

§ See vol. i. p. 115.

No. CLXXXVIII.

TO THE HON. HENRY ERSKINE.*

ELLISLAND, 22*nd January*, 1789.

SIR,

THERE are two things which, I believe, the blow that terminates my existence alone can destroy—my attachment and propensity to poesy, and my sense of what I owe to your goodness. There is nothing in the different situations of a Great and a Little man that vexes me more than the ease with which the one practises some virtues that to the other are extremely difficult, or perhaps wholly impracticable. A man of consequence and fashion shall richly repay a deed of kindness with a nod and a smile, or a hearty shake of the hand; while a poor fellow labours under a sense of gratitude, which, like copper coin, though it loads the bearer, is yet of small account in the currency and commerce of the world. As I have the honour, Sir, to stand in the poor fellow's predicament with respect to you, will you accept of a device I have thought on to acknowledge these obligations I can never cancel? Mankind, in general, agree in testifying their devotion, their gratitude, their friendship, or their love, by presenting whatever they hold dearest. Everybody who is in the least acquainted with the character of a poet, knows that there is nothing in the world on which he sets so much value as his verses. I desire, from time to time, as she may bestow her favours, to present you with the productions of my humble Muse. The enclosed are the principal of her works on the banks of the Nith. The poem inscribed to R. G., Esq., is some verses, accompanying a request, which I sent to Mr. Graham of Fintry—a gentleman who has given double value to some important favours he has bestowed on me by his manner of doing them, and on whose future patronage, likewise, I must depend for matters to me of the last consequence.

I have no great faith in the boastful pretensions to intuitive propriety and unlaboured elegance. The rough material of Fine Writing is certainly the gift of Genius; but I as firmly believe that the workmanship is the united effort of pains, attention, and repeated trial. The piece addressed to Mr. Graham is my first essay in that didactic, epistolary way; which circumstance, I hope, will bespeak your indulgence. To your friend Captain Erskine's strictures † I lay claim as a relation; not, indeed, that I have the honour to be akin to the peerage, but because he is a son of Parnassus.

I intend being in Edinburgh in four or five weeks, when I shall certainly do myself the honour of waiting on you, to testify with what respect and gratitude, &c.

R. B.

* Supposed to have been written to the above.

† Captain Andrew Erskine, a poet and musical amateur residing in Edinburgh, brother to the Earl of Kelly.

No. CLXXXIX.

TO MR. DAVID BLAIR,

GUN MAKER, ST. PAUL'S SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM.

ELLISLAND, 23*rd January*, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

MY honour has lain bleeding these two months almost, as 'tis near that time since I received your kind though short epistle of the 29th October. The defensive tools do more than half mankind do, they do honour to their maker; but I trust that with me they shall have the fate of a miser's gold—to be often admired, but never used.

Long before your letter came to hand, I sent you, by way of Mr. Nicol, a copy of the book, and a proof-copy of the print, loose among the leaves of the book. These, I hope, are safe in your possession some time ago. If I could think of any other channel of communication with you than the villanous expensive one of the Post, I could send you a parcel of my Rhymes; partly as a small return for your kind, handsome compliment, and much more as a mark of my sincere esteem and respect for Mr. Blair. A piece I did lately I shall try to cram into this letter, as I think the turn of thought may perhaps please you.

> "Thou whom chance may hither lead,
> Be thou clad in russet weed," &c.‡

I remember with pleasure, my dear Sir, a visit you talked of paying to Dumfries, in Spring or Summer. I shall only say I have never parted with a man, after so little acquaintance, whom I more ardently wished to see again. At your first convenience, a line to inform me of an affair in which I am much interested—just an answer to the question, How you do? will highly oblige, my dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

R. B.

No. CXC.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., WRITER, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 24*th January*, 1789.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

WHEN I saw in my last newspaper that a Surgeon in Edinburgh was married to a certain amiable and accomplished young lady, whose name begins with Ann—a lady with whom I fancy I have the honour of

‡ See vol. i. pp. 142, 148.

being a little acquainted *—I sincerely felt for a much esteemed friend of mine. As you are the single, only instance that ever came within the sphere of my observation of human nature, of a young fellow, dissipated but not debauched, a circumstance that has ever given me the highest idea of the native qualities of your heart, I am certain that a disappointment in the tender passion must, to you, be a very serious matter. To the hopeful youth, keen on the badger foot of Mammon, or listed under the gaudy banners of ambition, a love-disappointment, as such, is an easy business; nay, perhaps he hugs himself on his escape; but to your scanty tribe of mankind, whose souls bear, on the richest materials, the most elegant impress of the Great Creator, Love enters deeply into their existence, and is entwined with their very thread of life. I can myself affirm, both from bachelor and wedlock experience, that Love is the Alpha and Omega of human enjoyment. All the pleasures, all the happiness of my humble compeers, flow immediately and directly from this delicious source. It is the spark of celestial fire which lights up the wintry hut of poverty, and makes the cheerless mansion warm, comfortable, and gay. It is the emanation of Divinity that preserves the sons and daughters of rustic labour from degenerating into the brutes with which they daily hold converse. Without it, life to the poor inmates of the cottage would be a damning gift.

I intended to go on with some kind of consolatory epistle, when, unawares, I flew off in this rhapsodical tangent. Instead of attempting to resume a subject for which I am so ill-qualified, I shall ask your opinion of some verses I have lately begun on a theme of which you are the best judge I ever saw. It is Love too; though not just warranted by the law of nations. A married lady of my acquaintance, whose *crim. con.* amour with a certain Captain made some noise in the world, is supposed to write to him, now in the West Indies, as follows :—

By all I lov'd, neglected and forgot,
No friendly face e'er lights my squalid cot;
Shunn'd, hated, wrong'd, unpitied, unredrest,
The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest!

In vain would Prudence, with decorous sneer,
Point out a censuring world, and bid me fear;
Above the world, on wings of Love, I rise—
I know its worst, and can that worst despise:
Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall,
M————————y, rich reward, o'erpays them all!

Mild zephyrs waft thee to life's farthest shore,
Nor think of me and my distresses more:
Falsehood accurst! No! still I beg a place,
Still near thy heart some little, little trace;
For that dear trace the world I would resign:
O let me live, and die, and think it mine!
"I burn, I burn, as when thro' ripen'd corn
By driving winds the crackling flames are borne;"
Now raving-wild, I curse that fatal night,
Then bless the hour that charm'd my guilty sight:
In vain the laws their feeble force oppose,
Chain'd at Love's feet, they groan, his vanquish'd foes:
In vain Religion meets my shrinking eye,
I dare not combat, but I turn and fly:
Conscience in vain upbraids th' unhallow'd fire,
Love grasps her scorpions—stifled they expire!
Reason drops headlong from his sacred throne,
Your dear idea reigns, and reigns alone;
Each thought intoxicated homage yields,
And riots wanton in forbidden fields.
By all on high adoring mortals know!
By all the conscious villain fears below!
By your dear self!—the last great oath I swear—
Not life, nor soul, were ever half so dear!

R. B.

* Married at Edinburgh, Mr. Forrest Dewar, Surgeon, to Miss Anne Stewart, daughter of John Stewart, Esq., of East Craigs, January 13, 1789.

No. CXCI.

TO ROBERT RIDDELL, Esq., OF FRIAR'S CARSE.

ELLISLAND, 1789.

SIR,

I WISH from my inmost soul it were in my power to give you a more substantial gratification and return for all your goodness to the poet, than transcribing a few of his idle rhymes. However, "an old song," though, to a proverb, an instance of insignificance, is generally the only coin a poet has to pay with.

If my poems which I have transcribed, and mean still to transcribe into your Book, were equal to the grateful respect and high esteem I bear for the gentleman to whom I present them, they would be the finest poems in the language. As they are, they will at least be a testimony with what sincerity I have the honour to be, Sir, your devoted, humble servant.

R. B.

No. CXCII.

TO THE RIGHT REV. DR. JOHN GEDDES.*

ELLISLAND, *3rd February*, 1789.

VENERABLE FATHER,

As I am conscious that wherever I am, you do me the honour to interest yourself in my welfare, it gives me pleasure to inform you that I am here at last, stationary in the serious business of life, and have now not only the retired leisure, but the hearty inclination to attend to those great and important questions—what I am? where I am! and for what I am destined?

In that first concern, the conduct of the man, there was ever but one side on which I was habitually blameable, and there I have secured myself in the way pointed out by Nature and Nature's God. I was sensible that, to so helpless a creature as a poor poet, a wife and a family were incumbrances, which a species of prudence would bid him shun; but when the alternative was, being at eternal warfare with myself on account of habitual follies —to give them no worse name—which no general example, no licentious wit, no sophistical infidelity, would to me ever justify, I must have been a fool to have hesitated, and a madman to have made another choice. Besides I had, in "my Jean," a long and much loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and who could trifle with such a deposit?

In the affair of a livelihood, I think myself tolerably secure: I have good hopes of my farm, but should they fail, I have an Excise Commission, which, on my simple petition, will at any time procure me bread. There is a certain stigma affixed to the character of an excise officer, but I do not intend to borrow honour from my profession; and though the salary be comparatively small, it is luxury to any thing that the first twenty-five years of my life taught me to expect.

. . . . . .

Thus, with a rational aim and method in life, you may easily guess, my reverend and much-honoured friend, that my characteristical trade is not forgotten; I am, if possible, more than ever an enthusiast to the Muses. I am determined to study Man and Nature, and in that view, incessantly to try if the ripening and corrections of years can enable me to produce something worth preserving.

You will see in your book, which I beg your pardon for detaining so long, that I have been tuning my lyre on the banks of Nith.† Some larger poetic plans that are floating in my imagination, or partly put in execution, I shall impart to you when I have the pleasure of meeting with you; which, if you are then in Edinburgh, I shall have about the beginning of March.

That acquaintance, worthy Sir, with which you were pleased to honour me, you must still allow me to challenge; for with whatever unconcern I give up my transient connection with the merely Great (those self-important beings whose intrinsic worthlessness is often concealed under the accidental advantages of their birth), I cannot lose the patronizing notice of the learned and the good, without the bitterest regret.

R. B.

No. CXCIII.

ADDRESS OF THE SCOTTISH DISTILLERS

TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM PITT.

SIR,

WHILE pursy burgesses crowd your gate, sweating under the weight of heavy addresses, permit us, the quondam distillers in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, to approach you, not with venal approbation, but with fraternal condolence; not as what you are just now, or for some time have been, but as what in all probability you will shortly be. We shall have the merit of not deserting our *friends* in the day of their calamity, and you will have the satisfaction of perusing at least one honest address. You are well acquainted with the dissection of human nature; nor do you need the assistance of a fellow-creature's bosom to inform you that man is always a selfish, often a perfidious being. This assertion, however the hasty conclusions of superficial observation may doubt it, or the raw inexperience of youth may deny it, those who make the fatal experiment we have done will feel it. You are a statesman, and consequently are not ignorant of the traffic of these corporation compliments. The little great man who drives the borough to market, and the very great man who buys the borough in that market, they two do the whole business; and you well know they, likewise, have their price. With that sullen disdain which you can so well assume, rise illustrious Sir, and spurn these hireling efforts of venal stupidity. They are the compliments of a man's friends on the morning of his execution; they take a decent

* John Geddes, a remarkable self-taught genius, Roman Catholic clergyman, Biblical critic, and miscellaneous writer. He was born at Arradowl in Banff-shire in 1737, and died in London in 1802. He was author of the well-known humorous Scottish song called "The Wee Wifickie."

† A copy of Burns' own poems, belonging to Bishop Geddes, into which the poet had transferred some of his recent productions.

farewell, resign you to your fate, and hurry away from your approaching hour.*

If fame say true, and omens be not very much mistaken, you are about to make your exit from that world where the sun of gladness gilds the path of prosperous men: permit us, great Sir, with the sympathy of fellow-feeling to hail your passage to the realms of ruin. Whether the sentiment proceed from the selfishness or cowardice of mankind is immaterial; but to a child of misfortune, pointing out those who are still more unhappy is giving him some degree of positive enjoyment. In this light, Sir, our downfall may be *again* useful to you; though not exactly *in the same way*, it is not perhaps the first time it has gratified your feelings. It is true, the triumph of your evil star is exceedingly despiteful. At an age when others are the votaries of pleasure, or underlings in business, you had attained the highest wish of a British statesman; and with the ordinary date of human life, what a prospect was before you! Deeply rooted in *Royal Favour*, you overshadowed the land. The birds of passage, which follow ministerial sunshine through every clime of political faith and manners, flocked to your branches; and the beasts of the field (the lordly possessors of hills and valleys) crowded under your shade. "But behold a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven, and cried aloud, and said thus: Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches; shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches!" A blow from an unthought-of quarter, one of those terrible accidents which peculiarly mark the hand of Omnipotence, overset your career, and laid all your fancied honours in the dust. But turn your eyes, Sir, to the tragic scenes of our fate:—an ancient nation, that for many ages had gallantly maintained the unequal struggle for independence with her much more powerful neighbour, at last agrees to a union which should ever after make them one people. In consideration of certain circumstances, it was covenanted that the former should enjoy a stipulated alleviation in her share of the public burdens, particularly in that branch of the revenue called the Excise. This just privilege has of late given great umbrage to some interested, powerful individuals of the more potent half of the empire, and they have spared no wicked pains, under insidious pretexts, to subvert the spirit of their ancient enemies, which they yet dreaded too much openly to attack.

In this conspiracy we fell; nor did we alone suffer, our country was deeply wounded. A number of (we will say) respectable individuals, largely engaged in trade, where we were not only useful, but absolutely necessary to our country in her dearest interests; we, with all that was near and dear to us, were sacrificed, without remorse, to the infernal deity of political Expediency, not that sound policy, the good of the whole. We fell to gratify the wishes of dark envy, and the views of unprincipled ambition! Your foes, Sir, were avowed; you fell in the face of day; your enemies were too brave to take an ungenerous advantage. On the contrary, our enemies, to complete our overthrow, contrived to make their guilt appear the villainy of a nation. Your downfall only drags with you your private friends and partizans: in our misery are more or less involved the most numerous and most valuable part of the community—all those who immediately depend on the cultivation of the soil, from the landlord of a province down to his lowest hind.

Allow us, Sir, yet further, just to hint at another rich vein of comfort in the dreary regions of adversity—the gratulations of an approving conscience. In a certain great assembly, of which you are a distinguished member, panegyrics on your private virtues have so often wounded your delicacy, that we shall not distress you with anything on the subject. There is, however, one part of your public conduct which our feelings will not permit us to pass in silence: our gratitude must trespass on your modesty; we mean, worthy Sir, your whole behaviour to the Scots Distillers. In evil hours, when obtrusive recollection presses bitterly on the sense, let that, Sir, come like a healing angel, and speak the peace to your soul which the world can neither give nor take away. We have the honour to be, Sir, your sympathizing fellow-sufferers, and grateful humble servants,

JOHN BARLEYCORN, *Præses.*

* This letter was written while the Regency Bill was pending, and Pitt's downfall was thought certain.

No. CXCIV.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

ELLISLAND, *9th February*, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

WHY I did not write to you long ago is what, even on the rack, I could not answer. If you can in your mind form an idea of indolence, dissipation, hurry, cares, change of country, entering on untried scenes of life, all combined, you will save me the trouble of a blushing apology. It could not be want of regard for a man for whom I had a high esteem before I knew him—an esteem which has much increased since I did know him; and this caveat entered, I shall plead guilty to any other indictment with which you shall please to charge me.

After I parted from you, for many months my life was

one continued scene of dissipation. Here at last I am become stationary, and have taken a farm and—a wife. The farm beautifully situated on the Nith, a large river that runs by Dumfries, and falls into the Solway Frith. I have gotten a lease of my farm as long as I pleased; but how it may turn out is just a guess, and it is yet to improve and enclose, &c.; however, I have good hopes of my bargain on the whole.

My wife is my Jean, with whose story you are partly acquainted. I found I had a much-loved fellow creature's happiness or misery among my hands, and I durst not trifle with so sacred a deposit. Indeed I have not any reason to repent the step I have taken, as I have attached myself to a very good wife, and have shaken myself loose of a very bad failing.

I have found my book a very profitable business, and with the profits of it I have begun life pretty decently. Should fortune not favour me in farming, as I have no great faith in her fickle ladyship, I have provided myself in another resource, which, however some folks may affect to despise it, is still a comfortable shift in the day of misfortune. In the hey-day of my fame, a gentleman, whose name at least I dare say you know, as his estate lies somewhere near Dundee, Mr. Graham, of Fintry, one of the Commissioners of Excise, offered me the commission of an Excise officer. I thought it prudent to accept the offer; and accordingly I took my instructions, and have my commission by me. Whether I may ever do duty, or be a penny the better for it, is what I do not know; but I have the comfortable assurance, that come whatever ill fate will, I can, on my simple petition to the Excise-board, get into employ.

We have lost poor uncle Robert this winter. He had long been very weak, and with very little alteration in him he expired January 3.* His son William has been with me this winter, and goes in May to bind himself to be a mason with my father-in-law, who is a pretty considerable architect in Ayrshire. His other son, the eldest, John, comes to me I expect in summer. They are both remarkably stout young fellows, and promise to do well. His only daughter, Fanny, has been with me ever since her father's death, and I propose keeping her in my family till she be quite woman-grown, and be fit for better service. She is one of the cleverest girls, and has one of the most amiable dispositions, that I have ever seen.

All friends in this country and Ayrshire are well. Remember me to all friends in the north. My wife joins me in compliments to your bedfellow and family. I would write your brother-in-law, but have lost his address. For goodness sake don't take example by me, but write me soon. I am ever, my dear Cousin, yours most sincerely,

R. B.

* This friend of the poet died, not at Ellisland, but in his own house at Stewarton.

No. CXCV.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, LONGTOWN.

Isle, 2*nd March*, 1789.

My Dear William,

I arrived from Edinburgh only the night before last, so could not answer your epistle sooner. I congratulate you on the prospect of employ; and I am indebted to you for one of the best letters that has been written by any mechanic lad in Nithsdale, or Annandale, or any dale on either side of the Border, this twelvemonth. Not that I would have you always affect the stately stilts of studied composition, but surely writing a handsome letter is an accomplishment worth courting; and, with attention and practice, I can promise you that it will soon be an accomplishment of yours. If my advice can serve you (that is to say, if you can resolve to accustom yourself not only in reviewing your own deportment, manners, &c., but also in carrying your consequent resolutions of amending the faulty parts into practice), my small knowledge and experience of the world is heartily at your service. I intended to have given you a sheetful of counsels, but some business has prevented me. In a word learn *Taciturnity;* let that be your motto. Tho' you had the wisdom of Newton, or the wit of Swift, garrulousness would lower you in the eyes of your fellow-creatures. I 'll probably write you next week. I am, your brother,

R. B.

No. CXCVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Ellisland, 4*th March*, 1789.

Here am I, my honoured friend, returned safe from the capital. To a man who has a home, however humble or remote (if that home is, like mine, the scene of domestic comfort), the bustle of Edinburgh will soon be a business of sickening disgust:

"Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate you!"

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim—"What merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of pre-existence, that he is ushered into this state of being with sceptre of rule, and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world, the sport of folly,

or the victim of pride?" I have read somewhere of a monarch (in Spain, I think it was), who was so out of humour with the Ptolemæan system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labour and absurdity. I will not defend the blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Princes Street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that if a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his own consequence in the world, could have pushed out the longitude of his common size, as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a prospect-glass, this trifling alteration, not to mention the prodigious saving it would be in the tear and wear of the neck and limb-sinews of many of his Majesty's liege subjects, in the way of tossing the head and tiptoe strutting, would evidently turn out a vast advantage, in enabling us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow, or making way to a great man, and that too within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature itself requires; as a measuring glance at its towering altitude would determine the affair like instinct.

You are right, Madam, in your idea of poor Mylne's poem, which he has addressed to me. The piece has a good deal of merit, but it has one great fault—it is by far too long. Besides, my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice, under the title of Scottish Poets, that the very term Scottish Poetry borders on the burlesque. When I write to Mr. Carfrae, I shall advise him rather to try one of his deceased friend's English pieces. I am prodigiously hurried with my own matters, else I would have requested a perusal of all Mylne's poetic performances; and would have offered his friends my assistance in either selecting or correcting what would be proper for the press. What it is that occupies me so much, and perhaps a little oppresses my present spirits, shall fill up a paragraph in some future letter. In the mean time allow me to close this epistle with a few lines done by a friend of mine. . . . . I give you them, that, as you have seen the original, you may guess whether one or two alterations I have ventured to make in them, be any real improvement.

"Like the fair plant that from our touch withdraws,
Shrink mildly fearful even from applause,
Be all a mother's fondest hope can dream,
And all you are, my charming Rachel, seem.
Straight as the fox-glove, ere her bells disclose,
Mild as the maiden-blushing hawthorn blows,
Fair as the fairest of each lovely kind,
Your form shall be the image of your mind;
Your manners shall so true your soul express,
That all shall long to know the worth they guess;
Congenial hearts shall greet with kindred love,
And even sick'ning envy must approve." *

R. B.

No. CXCVII.

TO THE REV. PETER CARFRAE.

ELLISLAND, 1789.

REV. SIR,

I DO not recollect that I have ever felt a severer pang of shame, than on looking at the date of your obliging letter which accompanied Mr. Mylne's poem. . . .

I am much to blame; the honour Mr. Mylne has done me, greatly enhanced in its value by the endearing, though melancholy circumstance, of its being the last production of his muse, deserved a better return.

I have, as you hint, thought of sending a copy of the poem to some periodical publication; but on second thoughts, I am afraid that in the present case it would be an improper step. My success, perhaps as much accidental as merited, has brought an inundation of nonsense under the name of Scottish poetry. Subscription bills for Scottish poems have so dunned, and daily do dun the public, that the very name is in danger of contempt. For these reasons, if publishing any of Mr. Mylne's poems in a magazine, &c., be at all prudent, in my opinion it certainly should not be a Scottish poem. The profits of the labours of a man of genius are, I hope, as honourable as any profits whatever; and Mr. Mylne's relations are most justly entitled to that honest harvest which fate has denied himself to reap. But let the friends of Mr. Mylne's fame (among whom I crave the honour of ranking myself) always keep in eye his respectability as a man and as a poet, and take no measure that, before the world knows anything about him, would risk his name and character being classed with the fools of the times.

I have, Sir, some experience of publishing; and the way in which I would proceed with Mr. Mylne's poems is this:—I will publish, in two or three English and Scottish public papers, any one of his English poems which should, by private judges, be thought the most excellent, and mention it at the same time as one of the productions of a Lothian farmer of respectable character, lately deceased, whose poems his friends had it in idea to publish soon by subscription, for the sake of his numerous family: not in pity to that family, but in justice to what his friends think the poetic merits of the deceased; and to

* "These beautiful lines, we have reason to believe, are the production of the lady to whom this letter is addressed."—CURRIE.

secure in the most effectual manner, to those tender connections, whose right it is, the pecuniary reward of those merits.* R. B.

No. CXCVIII.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, LONGTOWN.

Isle, *Tuesday Even.*

Dear William,

In my last, I recommended that invaluable apophthegm—learn taciturnity.

It is absolutely certain that nobody can know our thoughts; and yet, from a slight observation of mankind, one would not think so. What mischiefs daily arise from silly garrulity, or foolish confidence! There is an excellent Scots saying, that "A man's mind is his kingdom." It is certainly so; but how few can govern that kingdom with propriety?

The serious mischiefs in business which this flux of language occasions, do not come immediately to your situation; but in another point of view, the dignity of the man, now is the time that will either make or mar you. Yours is the time of life for laying in habits; you cannot avoid it, though you should choose; and these habits will stick to your last sand. At after periods, even at so little advance as my years, 'tis true, one may still be very sharp-sighted to one's habitual failings and weaknesses; but to eradicate, or even amend them, is quite a different matter. Acquired at first by accident, they by and by begin to be as it were *convenient*, and in time are in a manner a *necessary* part of our existence. I have not time for more. Whatever you read, whatever you hear, concerning the ways and works of that strange creature, Man, look into the living world about you—look into yourself for the evidence of the fact, or the application of the doctrine. I am, ever yours,

R. B.

No. CXCIX.

TO DR. JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

Ellisland, 23*rd March*, 1789.

Sir,

The gentleman who will deliver this is a Mr. Nielson,† a worthy clergyman in my neighbourhood, and a very particular acquaintance of mine. As I have troubled him with this packet, I must turn him over to your goodness, to recompense him for it in a way in which he much needs your assistance, and where you can effectually serve him:—Mr. Nielson is on his way for France, to wait on his Grace of Queensberry, on some little business of a good deal of importance to him, and he wishes for your instructions respecting the most eligible mode of travelling, &c., for him, when he has crossed the channel. I should not have dared to take this liberty with you, but that I am told, by those who have the honour of your personal acquaintance, that to be a poor honest Scotchman is a letter of recommendation to you, and that to have it in your power to serve such a character, gives you much pleasure.

The enclosed ode is a compliment to the memory of the Mrs. Oswald, of Auchencruive.‡ You probably knew her personally, an honour of which I cannot boast; but I spent my early years in her neighbourhood, and among her servants and tenants. I know that she was detested with the most heartfelt cordiality. However, in the particular part of her conduct which roused my poetic wrath, she was much less blameable. In January last, on my road to Ayrshire, I had put up at Bailie Whigham's, in Sanquhar, the only tolerable inn in the place. The frost was keen, and the grim evening and howling wind were ushering in a night of snow and drift. My horse and I were both much fatigued with the labours of the day, and just as my friend the Bailie and I were bidding defiance to the storm, over a smoking bowl, in wheels the funeral pageantry of the late great Mrs. Oswald; and poor I am forced to brave all the horrors of a tempestuous night, and jade my horse, my young favourite horse, whom I have just christened Pegasus, twelve miles farther on, through the wildest moors and hills of Ayrshire, to New Cumnock, the next inn. The powers of poesy and prose sink under me, when I would describe what I felt. Suffice it to say, that when a good fire at New Cumnock had so far recovered my frozen sinews, I sat down and wrote the enclosed ode.

I was at Edinburgh lately, and settled finally with Mr. Creech; and I must own that, at last, he has been amicable and fair with me.

R. B.

No. CC.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, LONGTOWN.

Isle, 25*th March*, 1789.

I have stolen from my corn-sowing this minute to write a line to accompany your shirt and hat, for I can no more.

* A letter in answer to the one which the Rev. Peter Carfrae addressed to Burns, regarding some MS. poems left by a Mr. Mylne of Lochell. Mylne's pieces were published in 1790.

† The Rev. Edward Nielson, minister of Kirkbean, in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright.

‡ See vol. i. p. 151.

Your sister Nannie arrived yesternight, and begs to be remembered to you. Write me every opportunity—never mind postage. My head too is as addle as an egg this morning with dining abroad yesterday. I received yours by the mason. Forgive this foolish-looking scrawl of an epistle. I am ever, my dear William, yours,

R. B.

P. S.—If you are not then gone from Longtown, I 'll write you a long letter by this day se'ennight. If you shall not succeed in your tramps, don't be dejected, or take any rash step: return to us in that case, and we 'll court Fortune's better humour. Remember this, I charge you. R. B.

No. CCI.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, *2nd April*, 1789.

I will make no excuses, my dear Bibliopolus (God forgive me for murdering language!) that I have sat down to write you on this vile paper, stained with the sanguinary scores of "thae curs'd horse-leeches o' the Excise." It is economy, Sir; it is that cardinal virtue, prudence: so I beg you will sit down, and either compose or borrow a panegyric. (If you are going to borrow, apply to our friend Ramsay * for the assistance of the author of those pretty little buttering paragraphs of euloginms on your thrice-honoured, and never-enough-to-be-praised, Magistracy—how they hunt down a housebreaker with the sanguinary perseverance of a blood-hound—how they out-do a terrier in a badger-hole, in unearthing a resetter of stolen goods—how they steal on a thoughtless troop of night-nymphs as a spaniel winds the unsuspecting covey—or how they riot over a ravaged bawdy-house as a cat does o'er a plundered mouse-nest—how they new-vamp old churches, aiming at appearances of piety; plan squares and colleges, to pass for men of taste and learning, &c., &c., &c.; while old Edinburgh, like the doating mother of a parcel of rakehelly prodigals, may sing "Hooly and Fairly," or cry, "Waes me that e'er I saw ye!" but still must put her hand in her pocket, and pay whatever scores the young dogs think proper to contract.) I was going to say—but this d—mn'd parenthesis has put me out of breath—that you should get that manufacturer of the tinselled crockery of magistratial reputations, who makes so distinguished and distinguishing a figure in the *Evening Courant*, to compose, or rather to compound, something very clever on my remarkable frugality; that I write to one of my esteemed friends on this wretched paper, which was originally intended for the venal fist of some drunken exciseman, to take dirty notes in a miserable vault of an ale-cellar.

O Frugality! thou mother of ten thousand blessings—thou cook of fat beef and dainty greens! thou manufacturer of warm Shetland hose and comfortable surtouts! thou old housewife, darning thy decayed stockings with thy ancient spectacles on thy aged nose! lead me, hand me in thy clutching palsied fist, up those heights, and through those thickets, hitherto inaccessible and impervious to my anxious, weary feet—not those damn'd Parnassian crags, bleak and barren, where the hungry worshippers of fame are breathless, clambering, hanging between heaven and hell; but those glittering cliffs of Potosi, where the all-sufficient, all-powerful deity, Wealth, holds his immediate court of joys and pleasures! where the sunny exposure of Plenty, and the hot walls of Profusion, produce those blissful fruits of Luxury, exotics in this world, and natives of Paradise! Thou withered sybil, my sage conductress, usher me into the refulgent, adored Presence! The Power, splendid and potent as he now is, was once the puling nursling of thy faithful care and tender arms! Call me thy son, thy cousin, thy kinsman, or favourite, and adjure the god by the scenes of his infant years, no longer to repulse me as a stranger or an alien, but to favour me with his peculiar countenance and protection! He daily bestows his greatest kindnesses on the undeserving and the worthless—assure him, that I bring ample documents of meritorious demerits! Pledge yourself for me that for the glorious cause of Lucre, I will do any thing, be any thing—but the horse-leech of private oppression, or the vulture of public robbery!

But, to descend from heroics—what, in the name of all the devils at once, have you done with my trunk? Please let me have it by the first carrier, except his name be Niven; he is a rascal who imposed, or would have imposed, on me the other day most infamously.

I want a Shakspeare: let me know what plays your used copy of Bell's Shakspeare wants. I want likewise an English dictionary—Johnson's, I suppose, is best. In these and all my *prose* commissions, the cheapest is always the best for me. There is a small debt of honour that I owe Mr. Robert Cleghorn, in Saughton Mills, my worthy friend and your well-wisher: please give him, and urge him to take it, the first time you see him, ten shillings' worth of anything you have to sell, and place it to my account.

The library scheme that I mentioned to you † is already

* Of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant.*

† The establishment of a parish library.

begun under the direction of Captain Riddell and *Me!* There is another in emulation of it going on at Closeburn, under the auspices of Mr. Menteith of Closeburn, which will be on a greater scale than ours. I have likewise secured it for you. Captain Riddell gave his infant Society a great many of his old books, else I had written you on that subject; but, one of these days, I shall trouble you with a commission for "The Monkland Friendly Society." A copy of the *Spectator*, *Mirror*, *Lounger;* "Man of Feeling," "Man of the World," "Guthrie's Geographical Grammar," with some religious pieces, will likely be our first order.

Write me first post, and send me the address of Stuart, publisher of the *Star* newspaper: this I beg particularly, but do not speak of it. I 'll expect along with the trunk, my Ainslie's map of Scotland; and if you could send your boy to Mr. Beugo, Engraver, he has a picture of mine a-framing, which will be ready by this time. You see the freedom I take with you. Please direct any parcels to me to the care of Walter Auld, Saddler, Dumfries. When I grow richer I will write to you on gilt-post, to make amends for this sheet. At present, every guinea has a five-guinea errand with, my dear Sir, your faithful, poor, but honest friend,

R. B.

(By Stuart, I mean the famous Stuart who differed with the rest of the proprietors and set up by himself.)

No. CCII.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER,
CARE OF MR. WRIGHT, CARRIER, LONGTOWN.

Isle, 15*th April*, 1789.

My Dear William,

I am extremely sorry at the misfortune of your legs; I beg you will never let any worldly concern interfere with the more serious matter, the safety of your life and limbs. I have not time in these hurried days to write you anything more than a mere how d'ye letter. I will only repeat my favourite quotation:

> "What proves the hero truly great
> Is never, never to despair."

My house shall be your welcome home; and as I know your prudence (would to God you had *resolution* equal to your *prudence!*) if, anywhere at a distance from friends, you should need money, you know my direction by post.

The enclosed is from Gilbert, brought by your sister Nanny. It was unluckily forgot. Yours to Gilbert goes by post. I heard from them yesterday; they are all well. Adieu.

R. B.

No. CCIII.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, BELL'S WYND, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, 24*th April*, 1789.

Dear Sir,

My trunk was unaccountably delayed in Edinburgh, and did not reach me till about ten days ago; so I had not much time of your music. I have sent you a list that I approve of, but I beg and insist that you will never allow my opinion to overrule yours. I will write you more at large next post, as I, at present, have scarce time to subscribe myself, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B

No. CCIV.

TO MRS. M'MURDO, DRUMLANRIG.*

Ellisland, 2*d May*, 1789.

Madam,

I have finished the piece which had the happy fortune to be honoured with your approbation; and never did little Miss with more sparkling pleasure show her applauded sampler to partial Mamma, than I now send my poem to you and Mr. M'Murdo, if he is returned to Drumlanrig. You cannot easily imagine what thin-skinned animals—what sensitive plants—poor poets are. How do we shrink into the imbittered corner of self-abasement, when neglected or condemned by those to whom we look up! and how do we, in erect importance, add another cubit to our stature on being noticed and applauded by those whom we honour and respect! My late visit to Drumlanrig has, I can tell you, Madam, given me a balloon waft up Parnassus, where on my fancied elevation I regard my poetic self with no small degree of complacency.

Surely, with all their sins, the rhyming tribe are not ungrateful creatures. I recollect your goodness to your humble guest—I see Mr. M'Murdo adding to the politeness

* Burns had visited the M'Murdos at Drumlanrig, and now sends Mrs. M'Murdo a poem he had partially recited to her. They were very accomplished people.

of the gentleman the kindness of a friend, and my heart swells as it would burst, with warm emotions and ardent wishes! It may be it is not gratitude—at least it may be a mixed sensation. That strange, shifting, doubling animal MAN is so generally, at best but a negative, often a worthless creature, that one cannot see real goodness and native worth without feeling the bosom glow with sympathetic approbation. With every sentiment of grateful respect, I have the honour to be, Madam, your obliged and grateful, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *4th May*, 1789.

YOU see, Madam, that I am returned to my folio epistles again. I no sooner hit on any poetic plan or fancy, but I wish to send it to you; and if knowing and reading them gives half the pleasure to you, that communicating them to you gives to me, I am satisfied.

As I am not devoutly attached to a certain monarch, I cannot say that my heart ran any risk of bursting, on Thursday was se'ennight, with the struggling emotions of gratitude. God forgive me for speaking evil of dignities! but I must say that I look on the whole business as a solemn farce of fragrant mummery. The following are a few stanzas of new Psalmody for that "joyful solemnity," which I sent to a London newspaper with the date and preface following:—

(KILMARNOCK, *25th April*.

MR. PRINTER,

IN a certain chapel not fifty leagues from the market cross of this good town, the following Stanzas of Psalmody, it is said, were composed for, and devoutly sung on—the late joyful solemnity of the 23rd.

"O sing a new song to the Lord,
Make, all and every one," &c.) *

So much for Psalmody. You must know that the publisher of one of the most blasphemous party London newspapers is an acquaintance of mine, and as I am a little tinctured with Buff and Blue myself, I now and then help him to a stanza.

I have another poetic whim in my head, which I at present dedicate, or rather inscribe, to the Right Honourable Charles J. Fox; but how long that fancy may hold, I can't say. A few of the first lines I have just rough-sketched as follows:—

"How Wisdom and Folly meet, mix, and unite;
How Virtue and Vice blend their black and their white," &c.†

I beg your pardon for troubling you with the enclosed to the Major's tenant before the gate; it is to request him to look me out two milk cows; one for myself, and another for Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, a very obliging neighbour of mine. John very obligingly offered to do so for me; and I will either serve myself that way, or at Mauchline fair. It happens on the 20th curt., and the Sunday preceding it I hope to have the honour of assuring you in person how sincerely I am, Madam, your highly obliged and most obedient, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCVI.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, *4th May*, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

YOUR *duty-free* favour of the 26th April I received two days ago; I will not say I perused it with pleasure; that is the cold compliment of ceremony; I perused it, Sir, with delicious satisfaction. In short, it is such a letter, that not you, nor your friend, but the legislature, by express proviso in their postage laws, should frank. A letter informed with the soul of friendship is such an honour to human nature, that they should order it free ingress and egress to and from their bags and mails, as an encouragement and mark of distinction to supereminent virtue.

I have just put the last hand to a little poem, which I think will be something to your taste. One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields sowing some grass seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from a neighbouring plantation, and presently a poor little wounded hare came crippling by me. You will guess my indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare at this season, when they all of them have young ones. Indeed there is something in that business of destroying for our sport individuals in the animal creation that do not injure us materially, which I could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue.

"Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye," &c.‡

* See vol. i. p. 166.

† See vol. i. p. 152.

‡ See vol. i. p. 154.

Let me know how you like my poem. I am doubtful whether it would not be an improvement to keep out the last stanza but one altogether.

Cruickshank is a glorious production of the Author of man. You, he, and the noble Colonel* of the Crochallan Fencibles are to me

"Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my breast."

I have a good mind to make verses on you all, to the tune of "Three gude fellows ayont the glen."

R. B.

No. CCVII.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

ELLISLAND, *5th May*, 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I AM happy to hear by yours from Newcastle, that you are getting some employ. Remember,

"On Reason build Resolve,
That column of true majesty in man."

I had a visit of your old landlord. In the midst of a drunken frolic in Dumfries, he took it into his head to come and see me; and I took all the pains in my power to please and entertain the old veteran. He is high in your praises, and I would advise you to cultivate his friendship, as he is, in his way, a worthy, and to you may be a useful man.

Anderson I hope will have your shoes ready to send by the waggon to-morrow. I forgot to mention the circumstance of making them pumps; but I suppose good calf shoes will be no great mistake. Wattie has paid me for the thongs.

What would you think of making a little inquiry how husbandry matters go, as you travel, and if one thing fail, you might try another?

Your falling in love is indeed a phenomenon. To a fellow of your turn it cannot be hurtful. I am, you know, a veteran in these campaigns, so let me advise you always to pay your particular assiduities and try for intimacy as soon as you feel the first symptoms of passion; this is not only best, as making the most of the little entertainment which the sportabilities of distant addresses always give, but is the best preservative for one's peace. I need not caution you against guilty amours—they are bad everywhere, but in England they are the devil. I shall be in Ayrshire about a fortnight. Your sisters send their compliments. God bless you.

R. B.

* William Dunbar, W.S.

No. CCVIII.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, *13th May*, 1789.

SIR,

THOUGH I intend making a little manuscript-book of my unpublished poems for Mrs. Graham, yet I cannot forbear in the meantime sending her the enclosed, which was the production of the other day. In the plea of humanity, the ladies, to their honour be it spoken, are ever warmly interested. That is *one* reason of my troubling you with this; another motive I have is a hackneyed subject in my letters to you—God help a poor devil who carries about with him a load of gratitude, of which he can never hope to ease his shoulders but at the expense of his heart! I waited on Collector Mitchell with your letter. It happened to be collection-day, so he was very busy; but he received me with the utmost politeness, and made me promise to call on him soon. As I don't wish to degrade myself to a hungry rook, gaping for a morsel, I shall just give him a hint of my wishes. I am going on with a bold hand in my farm, and am certain of holding it with safety for three or four years; and I think, if some cursed malevolent star have not taken irremovable possession of my zenith, that your patronage and my own priority then as an expectant, should run a fair chance for the division I want. By the bye, the Excise instructions you mentioned were not in the bundle; but 'tis no matter; Marshall in his "Yorkshire," and particularly that extraordinary man, Smith, in his "Wealth of Nations," find me leisure employment enough. I could not have given any mere *man* credit for half the intelligence Mr. Smith discovers in his book. I would covet much to have his ideas respecting the present state of some quarters of the world that are, or have been, the scenes of considerable revolutions since his book was written. Though I take the advantage of your goodness, and presume to send you any new poetic thing of mine, I must not tax you with answers to each of my idle letters. I remember you talked of being this way with my honoured friend, Sir William Murray, in the course of this summer. You cannot imagine, Sir, how happy it would make me, should you, too, illuminate my humble domicile. You will certainly do me the honour to partake of a farmer's dinner with me. I shall promise you a piece of good old beef, a chicken, or perhaps a Nith salmon, fresh from the wear, and a glass of good punch, on the shortest notice; and allow me to say that Cincinnatus or Fabricius, who presided in the august Roman senate, and led their invincible armies, would have jumped at such a dinner. I expect your honours with a kind of enthusiasm. I shall mark the year, and

mark the day, and hand it down to my children's children, as one of the most distinguished honours of their ancestor.

I have the honour to be, with sincerest gratitude, your obedient and very humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCIX.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN.*

Mauchline, 21*st May*, 1789.

My Dear Friend,

I was in the country by accident, and hearing of your safe arrival, I could not resist the temptation of wishing you joy on your return—wishing you would write to me before you sail again—wishing you would always set me down as your bosom friend—wishing you long life and prosperity, and that every good thing may attend you—wishing Mrs. Brown and your little ones as free of the evils of this world as is consistent with humanity—wishing you and she were to make two at the ensuing lying-in, with which Mrs. B. threatens very soon to favour me—wishing I had longer time to write to you at present; and, finally, wishing that if there is to be another state of existence, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Burns, our little ones of both families, and you and I, in some snug retreat, may make a jovial party to all eternity! My direction is at Ellisland, near Dumfries. Yours,

R. B.

No. CCX.

TO MR. JAMES HAMILTON.†

Ellisland, 26*th May*, 1789.

Dear Sir,

I send you, by John Glover, carrier, the above account for Mr. Turnbull, as I suppose you know his address.

I would fain offer, my dear Sir, a word of sympathy with your misfortunes; but it is a tender string, and I know not how to touch it. It is easy to flourish a set of high-flown sentiments on the subject that would give great satisfaction to—a breast quite at ease; but, as one observes who was very seldom mistaken in the theory of life, "The heart knoweth its own sorrows, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith."

Among some distressful emergencies that I have experienced in life, I have ever laid this down as my foundation of comfort—That he who has lived the life of an honest man, has by no means lived in vain!

With every wish for your welfare and future success, I am, my dear Sir, sincerely yours, R. B.

No. CCXI.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

Ellisland, 1787.

My Dear Sir,

It is indeed with the highest pleasure that I congratulate you on the return of days of ease and nights of pleasure, after the horrid hours of misery in which I saw you suffering existence when last in Ayrshire; I seldom pray for anybody, "I 'm baith dead-sweer and wretched ill o' t;" but most fervently do I beseech the Power that directs the world, that you may live long and be happy, but live no longer than you are happy. It is needless for me to advise you to have a reverend care of your health. I know you will make it a point never at one time to drink more than a pint of wine (I mean an English pint), and that you will never be witness to more than one bowl of punch at a time, and that cold drams you will never more taste; and above all things, I am convinced, that after drinking perhaps boiling punch, you will never mount your horse and gallop home in a chill late hour. Above all things, as I understand you are in the habit of intimacy with that Boanerges of Gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising the carnal moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness of things, which you practised so flagrantly that it was evident you delighted in them, neglecting, or perhaps profanely despising, the wholesome doctrine of faith without works, the only means of salvation. A hymn of thanksgiving would, in my opinion, be highly becoming from you at present, and in my zeal for your well-being, I earnestly press on you to be diligent in chaunting over the two enclosed pieces of sacred poesy. My best compliments to Mrs. Hamilton and Miss Kennedy. Yours in the Lord.

R. B.

* Richard Brown of Irvine, Burns' early friend.—See Life.
† Hamilton was an unfortunate grocer in Glasgow.

No. CCXII.

TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ.*

ELLISLAND, 30*th May*, 1789.

SIR,

I HAD intended to have troubled you with a long letter, but at present the delightful sensations of an omnipotent tooth-ache so engross all my inner man, as to put it out of my power even to write nonsense. However, as in duty bound, I approach my bookseller with an offering in my hand—a few poetic clinches, and a song. To expect any other kind of offering from the Rhyming Tribe would be to know them much less than you do. I do not pretend that there is much merit in these *morceaux*, but I have two reasons for sending them: *primo*, they are mostly ill-natured, so are in unison with my present feelings, while fifty troops of infernal spirits are driving post from ear to ear along my jaw bones; and *secondly*, they are so short, that you cannot leave off in the middle, and so hurt my pride in the idea that you found any work of mine too heavy to get through.

I have a request to beg of you, and I not only beg of you, but conjure you, by all your wishes and by all your hopes, that the muse will spare the satiric wink in the moment of your foibles: that she will warble the song of rapture round your hymeneal couch; and that she will shed on your turf the honest tear of elegiac gratitude! Grant my request as speedily as possible—send me by the very first fly or coach for this place three copies of the last edition of my poems, which place to my account.

Now may the good things of prose, and the good things of verse, come among thy hands, until they be filled with the *good things of this life*, prayeth R. B.

No. CCXIII.

TO MR. JOHN M'AULEY, DUMBARTON.

ELLISLAND, 4*th June*, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH I am not without my fears respecting my fate, at that grand, universal inquest of right and wrong, commonly called *The Last Day*, yet I trust there is one sin, which that arch-vagabond, Satan, who I understand is to be king's evidence, cannot throw in my teeth—I mean ingratitude. There is a certain pretty large quantum of kindness for which I remain, and, from inability, I fear must still remain, your debtor; but though unable to repay the debt, I assure you, Sir, I shall ever warmly remember the obligation. It gives me the sincerest pleasure to hear by my old acquaintance, Mr. Kennedy, that you are, in immortal Allan's language, "Hale, and weel, and living;" and that your charming family are well, and promising to be an amiable and respectable addition to the company of performers, whom the Great Manager of the Drama of Man is bringing into action for the succeeding age.

With respect to my welfare, a subject in which you once warmly and effectively interested yourself, I am here in my old way, holding my plough, marking the growth of my corn or the health of my dairy; and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the Muses, the only gypsies with whom I have now any intercourse. As I am entered into the holy state of matrimony, I trust my face is turned completely Zion-ward; and as it is a rule with all honest fellows to repeat no grievances, I hope that the little poetic licenses of former days will of course fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial prescription. In my family devotion, which, like a good Presbyterian, I occasionally give to my household folks, I am extremely fond of the psalm, "Let not the errors of my youth," &c., and that other, "Lo, children are God's heritage," &c., in which last Mrs. Burns, who, by the by, has a glorious "wood-note wild" at either old song or psalmody, joins me with the pathos of Handel's Messiah. R. B.

No. CCXIV.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

ELLISLAND, 8*th June*, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM perfectly ashamed of myself when I look at the date of your last. It is not that I forget the friend of my heart and the companion of my peregrinations; but I have been condemned to drudgery beyond sufferance, though not, thank God, beyond redemption. I have had a collection of poems by a lady put into my hands to prepare them for the press; which horrid task, with sowing corn with my own hand, a parcel of masons, wrights, plasterers, &c., to attend to, roaming on business through Ayrshire—all this was against me, and the very first dreadful article was of itself too much for me.

13th.—I have not had a moment to spare from incessant toil since the 8th. Life, my dear Sir, is a serious matter.

* Inclosing some poetry.

You know by experience that a man's individual self is a good deal; but believe me, a wife and family of children, whenever you have the honour to be a husband and a father, will show you that your present and most anxious hours of solitude are spent on trifles. The welfare of those who are very dear to us, whose only support, hope, and stay we are—this, to a generous mind, is another sort of more important object of care than any concerns whatever which centre merely in the individual. On the other hand, let no young, unmarried, rakehelly dog among you, make a song of his pretended liberty and freedom from care. If the relations we stand in to king, country, kindred, and friends, be anything but the visionary fancies of dreaming metaphysicians; if religion, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, humanity, and justice, be aught but empty sounds; then the man who may be said to live only for others, for the beloved, honourable female, whose tender, faithful embrace endears life, and for the helpless little innocents who are to be the men and women, the worshippers of his God, the subjects of his king, and the support, nay the very vital existence of his COUNTRY, in the ensuing age; compare such a man with any fellow whatever, who, whether he bustle and push in business among labourers, clerks, statesmen, or whether he roar and rant, and drink and sing in taverns—a fellow over whose grave no one will breathe a single heigh-ho, except from the cob-web tie of what is called good-fellowship—who has no view nor aim but what terminates in himself—if there be any grovelling earth-born wretch of our species, a renegado to common sense, who would fain believe that the noble creature Man is no better than a sort of fungus, generated out of nothing, nobody knows how, and soon dissipating in nothing, nobody knows where; such a stupid beast, such a crawling reptile, might balance the foregoing unexaggerated comparison, but no one else would have the patience.

Forgive me, my dear Sir, for this long silence. *To make you amends*, I shall send you soon, and more encouraging still, without any postage, one or two rhymes of my later manufacture.

R. B.

CCXV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 21*st June*, 1789.

DEAR MADAM,

WILL you take the effusions, the miserable effusions of low spirits, just as they flow from their bitter spring? I know not of any particular cause for this worst of all my foes besetting me, but for some time my soul has been beclouded with a thickening atmosphere of evil imaginations and gloomy presages. . . . .

Monday Evening.

I HAVE just heard Mr. Kilpatrick give a sermon. He is a man famous for his benevolence, and I revere him; but from such ideas of my Creator, good Lord deliver me! Religion, my honoured friend, is surely a simple business, as it equally concerns the ignorant and the learned, the poor and the rich. That there is an incomprehensible Great Being, to whom I owe my existence, and that he must be intimately acquainted with the operations and progress of the internal machinery, and consequent outward deportment of this creature which he has made; these are, I think, self-evident propositions. That there is a real and eternal distinction between virtue and vice, and consequently, that I am an accountable creature; that from the seeming nature of the human mind, as well as from the evident imperfection, nay, positive injustice, in the administration of affairs, both in the natural and moral worlds, there must be a retributive scene of existence beyond the grave, must, I think, be allowed by every one who will give himself a moment's reflection. I will go farther, and affirm, that from the sublimity, excellence, and purity of his doctrine and precepts, unparalleled by all the aggregated wisdom and learning of many preceding ages, though, *to appearance*, he himself was the obscurest and most illiterate of our species; therefore, Jesus Christ was from God. . . . .

Whatever mitigates the Woes, or increases the happiness of others, this is my criterion of goodness; and whatever injures society at large, or any individual in it, this is my measure of iniquity.

What think you, Madam, of my creed? I trust that I have said nothing that will lessen me in the eye of one, whose good opinion I value almost next to the approbation of my own mind.

R. B.

No. CCXVI.

TO MISS HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS,* LONDON,

ON READING THE POEM ON "THE SLAVE TRADE."

MADAM,

OF the many problems in the nature of that wonderful creature, Man, this is one of the most extraordinary—that he shall go on from day to day, from

* Miss Williams, a literary lady of some note (see Boswell's "Johnson"), had previously written a kind letter to Burns, which appeared first in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, 1817.

week to week, from month to month, or perhaps from year to year, suffering a hundred times more in an hour from the impotent consciousness of neglecting what he ought to do, than the very doing of it would cost him. I am deeply indebted to you—first, for a most elegant poetic compliment; then for a polite, obliging letter; and, lastly, for your excellent poem on the Slave-trade; and yet, wretch that I am! though the debts were debts of honour, and the creditor a lady, I have put off and put off even the very acknowledgment of the obligation, until you must indeed be the very angel I take you for if you can forgive me.

Your poem I have read with the highest pleasure. I have a way, whenever I read a book—I mean a book in our own trade, Madam, a poetic one—and when it is my own property, that I take a pencil and mark at the end of verses, or note on margins and odd paper, little criticisms of approbation or disapprobation as I peruse along. I will make no apology for presenting you with a few unconnected thoughts that occurred to me in my repeated perusals of your poem. I want to show you that I have honesty enough to tell you what I take to be truths, even when they are not quite on the side of approbation; and I do it in the firm faith that you have equal greatness of mind to hear them with pleasure.

I know very little of scientific criticism; so all I can pretend to in that intricate art is merely to note, as I read along, what passages strike me as being uncommonly beautiful, and where the expression seems to be perplexed or faulty.

The poem opens finely. There are none of those idle prefatory lines which one may skip over before one comes to the subject. Verses 9th and 10th in particular,

> "Where ocean's unseen bound
> Leaves a drear world of waters round,"

are truly beautiful. The simile of the hurricane is likewise fine; and, indeed, beautiful as the poem is, almost all the similes rise decidedly above it. From verse 31st to verse 50th is a pretty eulogy on Britain. Verse 36th, "That foul drama deep with wrong," is nobly expressive. Verse 46th, I am afraid, is rather unworthy of the rest; "to dare to feel" is an idea that I do not altogether like. The contrast of valour and mercy, from the 46th verse to the 50th, is admirable.

Either my apprehension is dull, or there is something a little confused in the apostrophe to Mr. Pitt. Verse 55th is the antecedent to verses 57th and 58th, but in verse 58th the connection seems ungrammatical:—

> "Powers . . . . .
> With no gradations mark'd their flight,
> But rose at once to glory's height."

"Ris'n" should be the word instead of "rose." Try it in prose. Powers—their flight marked by no gradations, but (the same powers) risen at once to the height of glory. Likewise, verse 53rd, "For this," is evidently meant to lead on the sense of the verses 59th, 60th, 61st, and 62nd: but let us try how the thread of connection runs:—

> "For this . . . . .
> The deeds of mercy, that embrace
> A distant sphere, an alien race,
> Shall virtue's lips record, and claim
> The fairest honours of thy name."

I beg pardon if I misapprehend the matter, but this appears to me the only imperfect passage in the poem. The comparison of the sun-beam is fine.

The compliment to the Duke of Richmond is, I hope, as just as it is certainly elegant. The thought,

> "Virtue . . . . .
> Sends from her unsullied source,
> The gems of thought in purest force,"

is exceedingly beautiful. The idea, from verse 81st to the 85th, that the "blest decree" is like the beams of morning ushering in the glorious day of liberty, ought not to pass unnoticed or unapplauded. From verse 85th to verse 108th is an animated contrast between the unfeeling selfishness of the oppressor on the one hand, and the misery of the captive on the other. Verse 88th might perhaps be amended thus: "Nor ever *quit* her narrow maze." We are said to *pass* a bound, but we *quit* a maze. Verse 100th is exquisitely beautiful:—

> "They, whom wasted blessings tire."

Verse 110th is, I doubt, a clashing of metaphors; "to load a span," is, I am afraid, an unwarrantable expression. In verse 114th, "Cast the universe in shade" is a fine idea. From the 115th verse to the 142nd is a striking description of the wrongs of the poor African. Verse 120th, "The load of unremitted pain," is a remarkable strong expression. The address to the advocates for abolishing the slave-trade, from verse 143rd to verse 208th, is animated with the true life of genius. The picture of oppression—

> "While she links her impious chain,
> And calculates the price of pain;
> Weighs agony in sordid scales,
> And marks if life or death prevails"—

is nobly executed.

What a tender idea is in verse 180th! Indeed that whole description of home may vie with Thomson's description of home, somewhere in the beginning of his "Autumn." I do not remember to have seen a stronger expression of misery than is contained in these verses:

> "Condemned, severe extreme, to live
> When all is fled that life can give."

The comparison of our distant joys to distant objects is equally original and striking.

The character and manners of the dealer in the infernal traffic is a well done, though a horrid, picture. I am not sure how far introducing the Sailor was right; for though the sailor's common characteristic is generosity yet, in this case, he is certainly not only an unconcerned witness, but in some degree an efficient agent in the business. Verse 224th is a nervous . . . . expression—"The heart convulsive anguish breaks." The description of the captive wretch, when he arrives in the West Indies, is carried on with equal spirit. The thought that the oppressor's sorrow on seeing the slave pine, like the butcher's regret when his lamb dies a natural death, is exceedingly fine.

I am got so much into the cant of criticism, that I begin to be afraid lest I have nothing except the cant of it; and instead of elucidating my author, I am only benighting myself. For this reason, I will not pretend to go through the whole poem. Some few remaining beautiful lines, however, I cannot pass over. Verse 280th is the strongest description of selfishness I ever saw. The comparison in verse 285th and 286th is new and fine; and the line, "Your arms to penury you lend," is excellent.

In verse 317th, "like" should certainly be "as" or "so;" for instance—

> "His sway the hardened bosom leads
> To cruelty's remorseless deeds:
> As (or, so) the blue lightning, when it springs
> With fury on its livid wings,
> Darts on the goal with rapid force,
> Nor heeds that ruin marks its course."

If you insert the word "like" where I have placed "as," you must alter "darts" to "darting," and "heeds" to "heeding," in order to make it grammar. A tempest is a favourite subject with the poets, but I do not remember anything, even in Thomson's "Winter," superior to your verses from the 347th to the 351st. Indeed, the last simile, beginning with "Fancy may dress," &c., and ending with the 350th verse, is, in my opinion, the most beautiful passage in the poem; it would do honour to the greatest names that ever graced our profession.

I will not beg your pardon, Madam, for these strictures, as my conscience tells me that for once in my life I have acted up to the duties of a Christian, in doing as I would be done by.

I had lately the honour of a letter from Dr. Moore, where he tells me that he has sent me some books: they are not yet come to hand, but I hear they are on the way.

Wishing you all success in your progress in the path of fame, and that you may equally escape the danger of stumbling through incautious speed, or losing ground through loitering neglect, I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXVII.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq., OF FINTRY.

Ellisland, 31*st July*, 1789.

Sir,

The language of gratitude has been so prostituted by servile adulation and designing flattery, that I know not how to express myself when I would acknowledge the receipt of your last letter. I beg and hope, ever-honoured

> "Friend of my life! *true patron of my rhymes*,"

that you will always give me credit for the sincerest, chastest gratitude! The callous hypocrite may be louder than I in his grateful professions—professions which he never felt; or the selfish heart of the covetous may pocket the bounties of beneficence with more rejoicing exultation; but for the brimful eye, springing from the ardent throbbings of an honest bosom, at the goodness of a kindly active benefactor and politely generous friend, I dare call the Searcher of hearts and Author of all goodness to witness how truly these are mine to you.

Mr. Mitchell did not wait my calling on him, but sent me a kind letter, giving me a hint of the business; and on my waiting on him yesterday, he entered with the most friendly ardour into my views and interests. He seems to think, and from my own private knowledge I am certain he is right, that removing the officer who now does, and for these many years has done, duty in the division in the middle of which I live, will be productive of at least no disadvantage to the revenue, and may likewise be done without any detriment to him. Should the Honourable Board think so, and should they deem it eligible to appoint me to officiate in his present place, I am then at the top of my wishes. The emoluments of my office will enable me to carry on and enjoy these improvements in my farm, which, but for this additional assistance, I might in a year or two have abandoned. Should it be judged improper to place me in this division, I am deliberating whether I had not better give up my farming altogether, and go into the Excise whenever I can find employment. Now that the salary is £50 per annum, the Excise is surely a much superior object to a farm, which, without some foreign assistance, must, for half a lease, be a losing bargain. The worst of it is, I know there are some respectable characters who do me the honour to interest themselves in my welfare and behaviour; and as leaving the farm so soon may have an unsteady, giddy-headed appearance, I had, perhaps, better lose a little money than hazard such people's esteem.

You see, Sir, with what freedom I lay before you all my little matters—little, indeed, to the world, but of the most important magnitude to me. You are so good, that I trust I am not troublesome. I have heard and read a good

deal of Philanthropy, Benevolence, and Greatness of soul, and when rounded with the flourish of declamatory periods, or poured in the mellifluence of Parnassian measure, they have a tolerable effect on a musical ear; but when these high-sounding professions are compared with the very act and deed as it is usually performed, I do not think there is any thing in or belonging to Human Nature so badly disproportionate. In fact, were it not for a very few of our kind (among whom an honoured friend of mine, that to you, Sir, I will not name, is a distinguished instance), the very existence of Magnanimity, Generosity, and all their kindred virtues, would be as much a question with metaphysicians as the existence of Witchcraft. Perhaps the nature of man is not so much to blame for all this, as the situation in which, by some miscarriage or other, he is placed in this world. The poor, naked, helpless wretch, with such voracious appetites and such a famine of provision for them, is under a cursed necessity of turning selfish in his own defence. Except here and there a *scelerat* who seems to be a scoundrel from the womb of original Sin, thorough-paced selfishness is always the work of time. Indeed, in a little time, we generally grow so attentive to ourselves, and so regardless of others, that I have often in poetic frenzy looked on this world as one vast ocean, occupied and commoved by innumerable vortices, each whirling round its centre, which vortices are the children of men; and that the great design and merit, if I may say so, of every particular vortex consists in how wide it can extend the influence of its circle, and how much floating trash it can suck in and absorb.

I know not why I have got into this preaching vein, except it be to show you, Sir, that it is not any ignorance, but my knowledge of mankind which makes me so much admire your goodness to your humble servant.

I hope this will find my amiable young acquaintance, John, recovered from his indisposition, and all the members of your charming fireside circle well and happy. I am sure I am anxiously interested in all your welfares; I wish it with all my soul; nay, I believe I sometimes catch myself praying for it. I am not impatient of my own impotence under that immense debt which I owe to your goodness, but I wish and beseech that Being who has all good things in His hands, to bless and reward you with all those comforts and pleasures which He knows I would bestow on you, were they mine to give.

I shall return your books very soon. I only wish to give Dr. Smith* one other perusal, which I will do in two or three days. I do not think that I must trouble you for another cargo, at least for some time, as I am going to apply to Leadbetter and Symons on Gauging, and to study my sliding rule, Brannan's rule, &c., with all possible attention.

An apology for the impertinent length of this epistle would only add to the evil. I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply indebted, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCXVIII.

TO MR. DAVID SILLAR, MERCHANT, IRVINE.

Ellisland, near Dumfries, *5th August*, 1789.

My Dear Sir,

I was half in thoughts not to have written to you at all, by way of revenge for the two d—d business letters you sent me. I wanted to know all and about your Publication — what were your views, your hopes, fears, &c., &c., in commencing poet in print. In short, I wanted you to write to *Robin* like his old acquaintance *Davie;* and not in the style of Mr. Tare to Mr. Tret:— "Mr. Tret—Sir, This comes to advise you that fifteen barrels of herrings were, by the blessing of God, shipped safe on board the 'Lovely Janet,' Q. D. C., Duncan M'Leerie, master, &c., &c."

I hear you have commenced married man — so much the better for it. I know not whether the Nine Gypsies are jealous of my Lucky; but they are a good deal shyer since I could boast the important relation of Husband.

I have got, I think, about eleven subscribers for your book. When you send Mr. Auld, in Dumfries, his copies, you may with them pack me eleven; should I need more, I can write you; should they be too many, they can be returned. My best compliments to Mrs. Sillar, and believe me to be, dear David, ever yours,

R. B.

No. CCXIX.

TO . . . . . .

1789.

Dear Sir,

Whether in the way of my trade I can be of any service to the Rev. Doctor,† is I fear very doubtful. Ajax's shield consisted, I think, of seven bull hides and a plate of brass, which together set Hector's utmost force at defiance. Alas! I am not a Hector, and the worthy Doctor's foes are as securely armed as Ajax was. Ignorance, superstition, bigotry, stupidity, malevolence, self-conceit, envy—all strongly bound in a massy frame of

* The auther of "The Wealth of Nations."

† Dr. M'Gill of Ayr. See "The Kirk's Alarm," vol. i. p. 155.

brazen impudence. Good God, Sir! to such a shield humour is the peck of a sparrow, and satire the pop-gun of a school-boy. Creation-disgracing *scelerats* such as they, God only can mend, and the Devil only can punish. In the comprehending way of Caligula, I wish they had all but one neck. I feel impotent as a child to the ardour of my wishes! O for a withering curse, to blast the germins of their wicked machinations. O for a poisonous Tornado, winged from the Torrid Zone of Tartarus, to sweep the spreading crop of their villainous contrivances to the lowest hell!

R. B.

No. CCXX.

TO JOHN LOGAN, Esq., OF KNOCKSHINNOCH.*

Ellisland, near Dumfries,
7th August, 1789.

Dear Sir,

I intended to have written you long ere now, and, as I told you, I had gotten three stanzas and a half on my way in a poetic Epistle to you; but that old enemy of all "good works," the devil, threw me into a prosaic mire, and for the soul of me I cannot get out of it. I dare not write you a long letter, as I am going to intrude on your time with a long ballad. I have, as you will shortly see, finished "The Kirk's Alarm;" but, now that it is done, and that I have laughed once or twice at the conceits in some of the stanzas, I am determined not to let it get into the public; so I send you this copy, the first that I have sent to Ayrshire (except some few of the stanzas which I wrote off in embryo for Gavin Hamilton), under the express provision and request that you will only read it to *a few of us*, and do not on any account give, or permit to be taken, any copy of the ballad.

If I could be of any service to Dr. M'Gill, I would do it, though it should be at a much greater expense than irritating a few bigoted priests; but I am afraid serving him in his present *embarras* is a task too hard for me. I have enemies enow, God knows, though I do not wantonly add to the number. Still, as I think there is some merit in two or three of the thoughts, I send it to you as a small, but sincere testimony how much, and with what respectful esteem, I am, dear Sir, your obliged, humble servant,

R. B.

* Knockshinnoch is in Glenafton, Ayrshire. Mr. Logan died in Ayr, March 9, 1816.

No. CCXXI.

SONNET TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq., OF FINTRY.

ON RECEIVING A FAVOUR, 10TH AUGUST, 1789.

"I call no goddess to inspire my strains;
A fabled Muse may suit a Bard that feigns," &c.†

No. CCXXII.

TO MR. PETER STUART, LONDON.

August, 1789.

My Dear Sir,

The hurry of a farmer in this particular season, and the indolence of a poet at all times and seasons, will, I hope, plead my excuse for neglecting so long to answer your obliging letter of the 5th of August.

That you have done well in quitting your laborious concern in . . . . I do not doubt; the weighty reasons you mention were, I hope, very, and deservedly indeed, weighty ones, and your health is a matter of the last importance; but whether the remaining proprietors of the paper have also done well, is what I much doubt. The . . . ., so far as I was a reader, exhibited such a brilliancy of point, such an elegance of paragraph, and such a variety of intelligence, that I can hardly conceive it possible to continue a daily paper in the same degree of excellence: but if there was a man who had abilities equal to the task, that man's assistance the proprietors have lost.

When I received your letter I was transcribing for . . . . my letter to the magistrates of the Canongate, Edinburgh, begging their permission to place a tombstone over poor Fergusson, and their edict in consequence of my petition, but now I shall send them to ——. Poor Fergusson! If there be a life beyond the grave, which I trust there is; and if there be a good God presiding over all nature, which I am sure there is — thou art now enjoying existence in a glorious world, where worth of the heart alone is distinction in the man; where riches, deprived of all their pleasure-purchasing powers, return to their native sordid matter; where titles and honours are the disregarded reveries of an idle dream; and where that heavy virtue, which is the negative consequence of steady dulness, and those thoughtless, though often destructive follies, which are the unavoidable aberrations of frail human nature, will be thrown into equal oblivion as if they had never been!

† See vol. i. p. 191.

Adieu, my dear Sir! So soon as your present views and schemes are concentered in an aim, I shall be glad to hear from you; as your welfare and happiness is by no means a subject indifferent to, yours,

R. B.

No. CCXXIII.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

ELLISLAND, 14*th August*, 1789.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I RECEIVED your letter, and am very happy to hear that you have got settled for the winter. I enclose you the two guinea-notes of the Bank of Scotland, which I hope will serve your need. It is indeed not quite so convenient for me to spare money as it once was, but I know your situation, and, I will say it, in some respects your worth. I have no time to write at present, but I beg you will endeavour to pluck up a *little* more of the Man than you used to have. Remember my favourite quotation—

"On reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in Man;"

"What proves the Hero truly great
Is never, never to despair."

Your mother and sisters desire their compliments. *A Dieu je vous commende.*

R. B.

No. CCXXIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 6*th September*, 1789.

DEAR MADAM,

I HAVE mentioned in my last my appointment to the Excise, and the birth of the little Frank; who, by the bye, I trust will be no discredit to the honourable name of Wallace, as he has a fine manly countenance, and a figure that might do credit to a little fellow two months older; and likewise an excellent good temper, though when he pleases he has a pipe, only not quite so loud as the horn that his immortal namesake blew as a signal to take out the pin of Stirling bridge.

I had some time ago an epistle, part poetic and part prosaic, from your poetess, Miss J. Little,* a very ingenious, but modest composition. I should have written her as she requested, but for the hurry of this new business. I have heard of her and her compositions in this country; and I am happy to add, always to the honour of her character. The fact is, I know not well how to write to her: I should sit down to a sheet of paper that I knew not how to stain. I am no dab at fine-drawn letter-writing; and, except when prompted by friendship or gratitude, or, which happens extremely rarely, inspired by the Muse (I know not her name) that presides over epistolary writing, I sit down, when necessitated to write, as I would sit down to beat hemp.

Some parts of your letter of the 20th August struck me with the most melancholy concern for the state of your mind at present.

Would I could write you a letter of comfort! I would sit down to it with as much pleasure as I would to write an epic poem of my own composition that should equal the "Iliad." Religion, my dear friend, is the true comfort! A strong persuasion in a future state of existence; a proposition so obviously probable, that setting revelation aside, every nation and people, so far as investigation has reached, for at least near four thousand years, have, in some mode or other, firmly believed it. In vain would we reason and pretend to doubt. I have myself done so to a very daring pitch; but, when I reflected that I was opposing the most ardent wishes, and the most darling hopes of good men, and flying in the face of all human belief in all ages, I was shocked at my own conduct.

I know not whether I have ever sent you the following lines, or if you have ever seen them; but it is one of my favourite quotations, which I keep constantly by me in my progress through life, in the language of the book of Job,

"Against the day of battle and of war"—

spoken of religion:—

"'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright,
'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night.
When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few;
When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
Disarms affliction, or repels his dart;
Within the breast bids purest raptures rise,
Bids smiling conscience spread her cloudless skies."

I have been very busy with "Zeluco." The Doctor is so obliging as to request my opinion of it; and I have been revolving in my mind some kind of criticisms on novel-writing, but it is a depth beyond my research. I shall,

* Janet Little a large masculine-looking woman, was born near Ecclefechan, became a milkmaid in Loudon Castle, published her poems in 1792, gained by them £50, once visited Burns (see LIFE), married John Richmond, died in 1813—an estimable person, if no poet.

however, digest my thoughts on the subject as well as I can. "Zeluco" is a most sterling performance.

Farewell! *A Dieu, le bon Dieu, je vous commende!*

R. B.

No. CCXXV.

TO CAPTAIN RIDDELL, OF FRIARS CARSE.

ELLISLAND, 16*th October*, 1789.

SIR,

BIG with the idea of this important day at Friars Carse,* I have watched the elements and skies in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent. Yesternight, until a very late hour, did I wait with anxious horror for the appearance of some comet firing half the sky; or aerial armies of sanguinary Scandinavians darting athwart the startled heavens, rapid as the ragged lightning, and horrid as those convulsions of nature that bury nations.

The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly; they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes, and the mighty claret-shed of the day. For me, as Thomson, in his "Winter," says of the storm —I shall "hear astonish'd, and astonish'd sing."

> "The whistle and the man I sing:
> The man that won the whistle," &c.

> "Here are we met, three merry boys,
> Three merry boys I trow are we," &c.†

To leave the heights of Parnassus and come to the humble vale of prose. I have some misgivings that I take too much upon me, when I request you to get your guest, Sir Robert Lawrie, to frank the two enclosed covers for me, the one of them to Sir William Cunningham, of Robertland, Bart., at Auchenskeith, Kilmarnock —the other to Mr. Allan Masterton, Writing-Master, Edinburgh. The first has a kindred claim on Sir Robert, as being a brother Baronet, and likewise a keen Foxite; the other is one of the worthiest men in the world, and a man of real genius; so, allow me to say, he has a fraternal claim on you. I want them franked for to-morrow, as I cannot get them to the post to-night. I shall send a servant again for them in the evening. Wishing that your head may be crowned with laurels to-night, and free from aches to-morrow, I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

* See LIFE. The date of the letter is wrong; it should be 1790.

† See vol. i. p. 157.

No. CCXXVI.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 1*st November*, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAD written you long ere now, could I have guessed where to find you, for I am sure you have more good sense than to waste precious days of vacation-time in the dirt of business in Edinburgh. Wherever you are God bless you, and lead you not into temptation, but deliver you from evil!

I do not know if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an Excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. In this I was extremely lucky. Without ever having been an expectant, as they call their journeymen excisemen, I was directly planted down to all intents and purposes an officer of Excise, there to flourish and bring forth fruits—worthy of repentance.

I know how the word "exciseman," or still more opprobrious "gauger," will sound in your ears. I too have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children are things which have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting sergeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable audience, in the streets of Kilmarnock:—"Gentlemen, for your further and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown, and consequently, with us an honest fellow has the surest chance of preferment."

You need not doubt that I find several very unpleasant and disagreeable circumstances in my business; but I am tired with and disgusted at the language of complaint against the evils of life. Human existence in the most favourable situations does not abound with pleasures, and has its inconveniences and ills; capricious foolish man mistakes these inconveniences and ills, as if they were the peculiar property of his particular situation; and hence that eternal fickleness, that love of

change, which has ruined, and daily does ruin many a fine fellow, as well as many a blockhead; and is, almost without exception, a constant source of disappointment and misery. So far from being dissatisfied with my present lot, I earnestly pray the Great Disposer of events that it may never be worse, and I think I can lay my hand on my heart and say "I shall be content!"

I long to hear from you how you go on—not so much in business as in life. Are you pretty well satisfied with your own exertions, and tolerably at ease in your internal reflections? 'Tis much to be a great character as a lawyer, but beyond comparison more to be a great character as a man.

That you may be both the one and the other is the earnest wish—and that you will be both, is the firm persuasion of, my dear Sir, &c.,

R. B.

No CCXXVII.

TO MR. RICHARD BROWN, PORT GLASGOW.

ELLISLAND, *4th November*, 1789.

I HAVE been so hurried, my ever-dear friend, that though I got both your letters, I have not been able to command an hour to answer them as I wished; and even now, you are to look on this as merely confessing debt, and craving days. Few things could have given me so much pleasure as the news that you were once more safe and sound on terra firma, and happy in that place where happiness is alone to be found—in the fireside circle. May the benevolent Director of all things peculiarly bless you in all those endearing connections consequent on the tender and venerable names of husband and father! I have indeed been extremely lucky in getting an additional income of £50 a year, while, at the same time, the appointment will not cost me above £10 or £12 per annum of expenses more than I must have inevitably incurred. The worst circumstance is, that the Excise division which I have got is so extensive—no less than ten parishes to ride over; and it abounds besides with so much business, that I can scarcely steal a spare moment. However, labour endears rest, and both together are absolutely necessary for the proper enjoyment of human existence. I cannot meet you any where. No less than an order from the Board of Excise, at Edinburgh, is necessary before I can have so much time as to meet you in Ayrshire. But do you come and see me. We must have a social day, and perhaps lengthen it out half the night, before you go again to sea. You are the earliest friend I now have on earth, my brothers excepted: and is not that an endearing circumstance? When you and I first met, we were at the green period of human life. The twig would easily take a bent, but would as easily return to its former state. You and I not only took a mutual bent, but by the melancholy, though strong influence of being both of the family of the unfortunate, we were entwined with one another in our growth towards advanced age: and blasted be the sacrilegious hand that shall attempt to undo the union! You and I must have one bumper to my favourite toast, "May the companions of our youth be the friends of our old age!" Come and see me one year; I shall see you at Port Glasgow the next; and if we can contrive to have a gossiping between our two bedfellows, it will be so much additional pleasure. Mrs. Burns joins me in kind compliments to you and Mrs. Brown.

Adieu! I am ever, my dear Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. CCXXVIII.

TO MR. WM. BURNS, SADDLER, MORPETH.

ELLISLAND, 10*th November*, 1789.

DEAR WILLIAM,

I WOULD have written you sooner, but I am so hurried and fatigued with my Excise business, that I can scarcely pluck up resolution to go through the effort of a letter to anybody. Indeed you hardly deserve a letter from me, considering that you have spare hours in which you have nothing to do at all, and yet it was near three months between your two last letters.

I know not if you heard lately from Gilbert. I expect him here with me about the latter end of this week. . . My mother is returned, now that she has seen my little boy Francis fairly set to the world. I suppose Gilbert has informed you that you have got a new nephew. He is a fine thriving fellow, and promises to do honour to the name he bears. I have named him Francis Wallace, after my worthy friend, Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop.

The only Ayrshire news that I remember, in which I think you will be interested, is that Mr. Ronald is bankrupt. You will easily guess, that from his insolent vanity in his sunshine of life, he will now feel a little retaliation from those who thought themselves eclipsed by him; for, poor fellow, I do not think he ever intentionally injured any one. I might indeed, perhaps, except his wife, whom he certainly has used very ill; but she is still fond of him to distraction, and bears up

wonderfully—much superior to him—under this severe shock of fortune. Women have a kind of sturdy sufferance, which qualifies them to endure beyond, much beyond, the common run of men; but perhaps part of that fortitude is owing to their short-sightedness, for they are by no means famous for seeing remote consequences in all their real importance.

I am very glad at your resolution to live within your income, be that what it will. Had poor Ronald done so, he had not this day been a prey to the dreadful miseries of insolvency.

You are at the time of life when those habitudes are begun which are to mark the character of the future man. Go on and persevere, and depend on less or more success. I am, dear William, your brother,

R. B.

No. CCXXIX.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

9th December, 1789.

SIR,

I HAVE a good while had a wish to trouble you with a letter, and had certainly done it long ere now—but for a humiliating something that throws cold water on the resolution; as if one should say, "You have found Mr. Graham a very powerful and kind friend indeed, and that interest he is so kindly taking in your concerns, you ought by every thing in your power to keep alive and cherish." Now though, since God has thought proper to make one powerful and another helpless, the connection of obliger and obliged is all fair; and though my being under your patronage is to me highly honourable—yet, Sir, allow me to flatter myself, that, as a poet and an honest man, you first interested yourself in my welfare, and principally as such still, you permit me to approach you.

I have found the Excise business go on a great deal smoother with me than I expected; owing a good deal to the generous friendship of Mr. Mitchell, my collector, and the kind assistance of Mr. Findlater, my supervisor. I dare to be honest, and I fear no labour. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to my correspondence with the Muses. Their visits to me, indeed, and I believe to most of their acquaintance, like the visits of good angels, are "short and far between;" but I meet them now and then as I jog through the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr. I take the liberty to enclose you a few bagatelles, all of them the productions of my leisure thoughts in my excise rides.

If you know or have ever seen Captain Grose, the antiquarian, you will enter into any humour that is in the verses on him.* Perhaps you have seen them before, as I sent them to a London newspaper. Though, I daresay, you have none of the Solemn-League-and-Covenant fire, which shone so conspicuous in Lord George Gordon and the Kilmarnock weavers, yet I think you must have heard of Dr. M'Gill, one of the Clergymen of Ayr, and his heretical book. God help him, poor man! Though he is one of the worthiest, as well as one of the ablest of the whole priesthood of the Kirk of Scotland, in every sense of that ambiguous term, yet the poor Doctor and his numerous family are in imminent danger of being thrown out to the mercy of the winter winds. The enclosed ballad on that business is, I confess, too local, but I laughed myself at some conceits in it, though I am convinced in my conscience that there are a good many heavy stanzas in it too.

The Election Ballad,† as you will see, alludes to the present canvass in our string of burghs. I do not believe there will be a harder-run match in the whole general election. The *Great Man* here, like all renegadoes, is a flaming zealot kicked out before the astonished indignation of his deserted master, and despised, I suppose, by the party who took him in to be a mustering faggot at the mysterious orgies of their midnight iniquities, and a useful drudge in the dirty work of their country elections; he would fain persuade this part of the world that he is turned Patriot, and, where he knows his men, has the impudence to aim away at the unmistrusting manner of a man of conscience and principle. Nay, to such an intemperate height has his zeal carried him that, in convulsive violence to every feeling in his bosom, he has made some desperate attempts at the hopeless business of getting himself a character for Benevolence; and, in one or two late terrible strides in pursuit of party-interest, has actually stumbled on something like meaning the Welfare of his Fellow-Creatures.‡ I beg your pardon, Sir, if I differ from you in my idea of this *great man;* but were you to know his sins, as well of omission as commission, to this outraged land, you would club your curse with the execrating voice of the country. I am too little a man to have any political attachments; I am deeply indebted to, and have the warmest veneration for, individuals of both parties; but a man who has it in his power to be the Father of a Country, and who is only known to that country by the mischief he does in it, is a character of which one cannot speak with patience.

Sir James Johnston does "what man can do," but yet I doubt his fate. Of the burgh of Annan he is secure;

* In the letter the Poet inclosed his verses on Grose, "The Kirk's Alarm," and an election ballad.

† "The Five Carlins," see vol. i. p. 162.

‡ Alluding to the Duke of Queensberry.

Kirkcudbright is dubious. He has the provost; but Lord Daer, who does the honours of "great man" to the place, makes every effort in his power for the opposite interest. Luckily for Sir James, his Lordship, though a very good Lord, is a very poor politician. Dumfries and Sanquhar are decidedly the Duke's, "to sell or let;" so Lochmaben, a city containing upwards of fourscore living souls that cannot discern between their right hand and their left—for drunkenness—has at present the balance of power in her hands. The honourable council of that ancient burgh are fifteen in number; but alas! their fifteen names endorsing a bill of fifteen pounds, would not discount the said bill in any banking office. My lord provost, who is one of the soundest-headed, best-hearted, whisky-drinking fellows in the south of Scotland, is devoted to Sir James; but his Grace thinks he has a majority of the council, though I, who have the honour to be a burgess of the town, and know somewhat behind the curtain, could tell him a different story.

The worst of it for the buff and blue folks is, that their candidate, Captain Miller, my landlord's son, is, *entre nous*, a youth by no means above mediocrity in his abilities, and is said to have a huckster-lust for shillings, pence, and farthings. This is the more remarkable, as his father's abilities and benevolence are so justly celebrated.

The song beginning, "Thou lingering star," &c., is the last, and in my own opinion, by much the best of the enclosed compositions. I beg leave to present it with my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Graham.

I return you by the carrier, the bearer of this, Smith's "Wealth of Nations," Marshall's "Yorkshire," and "Angola." *Les Contes de Fontaine* is in the way of my trade, and I must give it another reading or two. *Chanson's Joyeuses* and another little French book, I keep for the same reason. I think you will not be reading them, and I will not keep them long.

Forgive me, Sir, for the stupid length of this epistle. I pray Heaven it may find you in a humour to read *The Belfast New Almanac*, or *The Bachelor's Garland*, containing five excellent new songs, or the Paisley poet's version of the Psalms of David, and then my impertinence may disgust the less.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your ever-grateful, humble servant, R. B.

No. CCXXX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.*

ELLISLAND, 13*th December*, 1789.

MANY thanks, dear Madam, for your sheet-full of rhymes. Though at present I am below the veriest prose, yet from you everything pleases. I am groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system; a system, the state of which is most conducive to our happiness, or the most productive of our misery. For now near three weeks I have been so ill with a nervous head-ache, that I have been obliged to give up for a time my Excise-books, being scarce able to lift my head, much less to ride once a week over ten muir parishes. What is Man! To-day in the luxuriance of health, exulting in the enjoyment of existence; in a few days, perhaps in a few hours, loaded with conscious painful being, counting the tardy pace of the lingering moments by the repercussions of anguish, and refusing or denied a comforter. Day follows night, and night comes after day, only to curse him with life which gives him no pleasure; and yet the awful, dark termination of that life is a something at which he recoils.

> "——— ——Tell us, ye dead;
> Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
> What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
> 'Tis no matter———a little time
> Will make us learn'd as you are, and as close."

Can it be possible, that when I resign this frail, feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence! When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no more to those that knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold, stiffened, unconscious, ghastly corse is resigned into the earth, to be the prey of unsightly reptiles, and to become in time a trodden clod, shall I yet be warm in life, seeing and seen, enjoying and enjoyed? Ye venerable Sages and holy Flamens, is there probability in your conjectures, truth in your stories, of another world beyond death; or are they all alike, baseless visions and fabricated fables? If there is another life, it must only be for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it? There I should meet an aged parent, now at rest from the many buffetings of an evil world, against which he so long and so bravely struggled. There should I meet the friend, the disinterested friend of my early life! the man who rejoiced to see me, because he loved me and could serve me. Muir! thy weaknesses were the aberrations of human nature, but thy heart glowed with every thing generous, manly, and noble; and if ever emanation from the All-good Being animated a human form, it was thine! There should I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognize my lost, my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honour, constancy, and love:—

> My Mary, dear departed shade!
> Where is thy place of heavenly rest?
> Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
> Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

* Transcribed partly from his Common-place Book.

Jesus Christ, thou amiablest of characters! I trust thou art no impostor, and that thy revelation of blissful scenes of existence beyond death and the grave is not one of the many impositions which, time after time, have been palmed on credulous mankind. I trust that in thee "shall all the families of the earth be blessed," by being yet connected together in a better world, where every tie that bound heart to heart, in this state of existence, shall be, far beyond our present conceptions, more endearing.

I am a good deal inclined to think with those who maintain, that what are called nervous affections are in fact diseases of the mind. I cannot reason, I cannot think; and but to you I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch, who is impaired in more than half of any faculties he possessed. Your goodness will excuse this distracted scrawl, which the writer dare scarcely read, and which he would throw into the fire, were he able to write any thing better, or indeed any thing at all.

Rumour told me something of a son of yours who was returned from the East or West Indies. If you have gotten news of James or Anthony, it was cruel in you not to let me know; as I promise you on the sincerity of a man, who is weary of one world and anxious about another, that scarce any thing could give me so much pleasure as to hear of any good thing befalling my honoured friend.

If you have a minute's leisure, take up your pen in pity to *le pauvre miserable*,

R. B.

No. CCXXXI.

TO LADY GLENCAIRN.*

Ellisland, *December*, 1789.

My Lady,

The honour you have done your poor poet, in writing him so very obliging a letter, and the pleasure the enclosed beautiful verses have given him, came very seasonably to his aid amid the cheerless gloom and sinking despondency of diseased nerves and December weather. As to forgetting the family of Glencairn, heaven is my witness with what sincerity I could use those old verses, which please me more in their rude simplicity than the most elegant lines I ever saw :—

"If thee, Jerusalem, I forget,
Skill part from my right hand.

My tongue to my mouth's roof let cleave,
If I do thee forget,
Jerusalem! and thee above
My chief joy do not set."

When I am tempted to do anything improper, I dare not, because I look on myself as accountable to your ladyship and family. Now and then, when I have the honour to be called to the tables of the great, if I happen to meet with any mortification from the stately stupidity of self-sufficient squires, or the luxuriant insolence of upstart nabobs, I get above the creatures by calling to remembrance that I am patronized by the noble House of Glencairn; and at gala-times, such as New-year's day, a christening, or the kirn-night, when my punch-bowl is brought from its dusty corner, and filled up in honour of the occasion, I begin with—*The Countess of Glencairn!* My good woman, with the enthusiasm of a grateful heart, next cries, *My Lord!* and so the toast goes on, until I end with *Lady Harriet's little angel!*† whose epithalamium I have pledged myself to write.

When I received your Ladyship's letter, I was just in the act of transcribing for you some verses I have lately composed, and meant to have sent them my first leisure hour, and acquainted you with my late change of life. I mentioned to my Lord my fears concerning my farm. Those fears were indeed too true; it is a bargain would have ruined me, but for the lucky circumstance of my having an Excise commission.

People may talk as they please of the ignominy of the Excise: £50 a year will support my wife and children, and keep me independent of the world; and I would much rather have it said that my profession borrowed credit from me, than that I borrowed credit from my profession. Another advantage I have in this business, is the knowledge it gives me of the various shades of human character, consequently assisting me vastly in my poetic pursuits. I had the most ardent enthusiasm for the Muses when nobody knew me but myself, and that ardour is by no means cooled now that my Lord Glencairn's goodness has introduced me to all the world. Not that I am in haste for the press. I have no idea of publishing, else I certainly had consulted my generous, noble patron; but after acting the part of an honest man, and supporting my family, my whole wishes and views are directed to poetic pursuits. I am aware that though I were to give performances to the world superior to my former works, still if they were of the same kind with those, the comparative reception they would meet with would mortify me. I have turned my thoughts

* Mother of Burns' patron.

† The late Sir Alexander Don, Bart., of Newton Don.

on the Drama. I do not mean the stately buskin of the Tragic Muse. Does not your Ladyship think that an Edinburgh theatre would be more amused with affectation, folly, and whim of true Scottish growth, than manners, which by far the greatest part of the audience can only know at second-hand? I have the honour to be your Ladyship's ever devoted and grateful, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCXXXII.

TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL CONSTABLE.*

ELLISLAND, 16*th December*, 1789.

MY LADY,

IN vain have I from day to day expected to hear from Mrs. Young, as she promised me at Dalswinton that she would do me the honour to introduce me at Tinwald; and it was impossible not from your Ladyship's accessibility, but from my own feelings, that I could go alone. Lately, indeed, Mr. Maxwell, of Currachan, in his usual goodness offered to accompany me, when an unlucky indisposition on my part hindered my embracing the opportunity. To court the notice or the tables of the great, except where I sometimes have had a little matter to ask of them, or more often the pleasanter task of witnessing my gratitude to them, is what I never have done, and I trust never shall do. But with your Ladyship I have the honour to be connected by one of the strongest and most endearing ties in the whole world—common sufferers in a cause where even to be unfortunate is glorious, the cause of heroic loyalty! Though my fathers had not illustrious honours and vast properties to hazard in the contest, though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders, yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost: with unshaken firmness and unconcealed political attachments, they shook hands with ruin for what they esteemed the cause of their king and their country. This language and the enclosed verses† are for your Ladyship's eye alone. Poets are not very famous for their prudence; but as I can do nothing for a cause which is now nearly no more, I do not wish to hurt myself.

I have the honour to be, my lady, your ladyship's obliged and obedient humble servant,

R. B

No. CCXXXIII.

TO PROVOST MAXWELL, OF LOCHMABEN.

ELLISLAND, 20*th December*, 1789.

DEAR PROVOST,

AS my friend Mr. Graham goes for your good town to-morrow, I cannot resist the temptation to send you a few lines; and as I have nothing to say, I have chosen this sheet of foolscap, and begun, as you see, at the top of the first page, because I have ever observed that when once people have fairly set out they know not where to stop. Now that my first sentence is concluded, I have nothing to do but to pray Heaven to help me on to another. Shall I write you on politics or religion?—two master subjects for your sayers of nothing. Of the first I dare say by this time you are nearly surfeited; and for the last, whatever they may talk of it who make it a kind of company concern, I never could endure it beyond a soliloquy. I might write you on farming, on building, on marketing; but my poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedeviled with the task of the superlatively damned, to make *one guinea do the business of three*, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word "business," though no less than four letters of my very short surname are in it.

Well, to make the matter short, I shall betake myself to a subject ever fruitful of themes—a subject, the turtle feast of the sons of Satan, and the delicious secret sugar-plum of the babes of grace—a subject sparkling with all the jewels that wit can find in the mines of Genius, and pregnant with all the stores of learning, from Moses and Confucius to Franklin and Priestley—in short, may it please your Lordship, I intend to write—*

If at any time you expect a field-day, in your town—a day when Dukes, Earls, and Knights pay their court to weavers, tailors, and cobblers,† I should like to know of it two or three days beforehand. It is not that I care three skips of a cur-dog for the politics, but I should like to see such an exhibition of human nature. If you meet with that worthy old veteran in Religion and good-fellowship, Mr. Jeffrey, or any of his amiable family,‡ I beg you will give them my best compliments.

R. B.

* Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, a descendant of the forfeited Earl of Nithsdale. This nobleman was implicated in the Rebellion of 1715, but his life was saved through the conduct of his Countess, whose ingenuity and presence of mind enabled him to effect his escape from the Tower of London. She exchanged clothes with her husband.

† Viz., the Verses to William Tytler, author of the Defence of Mary Queen of Scots, given at vol. i. p. 131.

* An obscene song.

† Alluding to a contested election.

‡ Minister of Lochmaben, father of the blue-eyed lass, upon whom Burns wrote the fine song, "I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen," given at vol. i. p. 164.

No. CCXXXIV.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 11*th January*, 1790.

DEAR BROTHER,

I MEAN to take advantage of the frank, though I have not in my present frame of mind much appetite for exertion in writing. My nerves are in a cursed state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself. It is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go to hell! I'll fight it out and be off with it.

We have got a set of very decent players here just now. I have seen them an evening or two. David Campbell, in Ayr, wrote to me by the manager of the company, a Mr. Sutherland, who is a man of apparent worth. On New's-year-day evening I gave him the following prologue, which he spouted to his audience with applause:—

> No song nor dance I bring from yon great city,
> That queens it o'er our taste—the more 's the pity:
> Tho', by the bye, abroad why will you roam?
> Good sense and taste are natives here at home. *

I can no more. If once I was clear of this cursed farm, I should respire more at ease.

R. B.

No. CCXXXV.

TO MR. WILLIAM DUNBAR, W.S.

ELLISLAND, 14*th January*, 1790.

SINCE we are here creatures of a day, since "a few summer days, and a few winter nights, and the life of man is at an end," why, my dear, much esteemed Sir, should you and I let negligent indolence, for I know it is nothing worse, step in between us and bar the enjoyment of a mutual correspondence? We are not shapen out of the common, heavy, methodical clod, the elemental stuff of the plodding, selfish race, the sons of Arithmetic and Prudence; our feelings and hearts are not benumbed and poisoned by the cursed influence of riches, which, whatever blessing they may be in other respects, are no friends to the nobler qualities of the heart: in the name of random Sensibility, then, let never the moon change on our silence any more. I have had a tract of bad health most part of this winter, else you had heard from me long ere now. Thank Heaven, I am now got so much better as to be able to partake a little in the enjoyments of life.

* See vol. i. p. 165.

Our friend Cunningham will perhaps have told you of my going into the Excise. The truth is, I found it a very convenient business to have £50 per annum, nor have I yet felt any of those mortifying circumstances in it that I was led to fear.

February 2.—I have not, for sheer hurry of business, been able to spare five minutes to finish my letter. Besides my farm business, I ride on my Excise matters at least 200 miles every week. I have not by any means given up the Muses. You will see in the third volume of Johnson's Scots Songs that I have contributed my mite there.

But, my dear Sir, little ones that look up to you for paternal protection are an important charge. I have already two fine, healthy, stout little fellows, and I wish to throw some light upon them. I have a thousand reveries and schemes about them and their future destiny. Not that I am a Utopian projector in these things; but I am resolved never to breed up a son of mine to any of the learned professions. I know the value of independence; and since I cannot give my sons an independent fortune, I shall give them an independent line of life. What a chaos of hurry, chance, and changes is this world, when one sits soberly down to reflect on it! To a father, who himself knows the world, the thought that he shall have sons to usher into it must fill him with dread; but if he have daughters, the prospect in a thoughtful moment is apt to shock him.

I hope Mrs. Fordyce and the two young ladies are well. Do let me forget that they are nieces of yours, and let me say that I never saw a more interesting, sweeter pair of sisters in my life. I am the fool of my feelings and attachments. I often take up a volume of my Spenser to realize you to my imagination, and think over the social scenes we have had together. God grant that there may be another world more congenial to honest fellows beyond this — a world where these rubs and plagues of absence, distance, misfortunes, ill health, &c., shall no more damp hilarity and divide friendship. This I know is your throng season, but half a page will much oblige, my dear Sir,

Yours sincerely,

R. B.

No. CCXXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 25*th January*, 1790.

IT has been owing to unremitting hurry of business that I have not written to you, Madam, long ere now. My

health is greatly better, and I now begin once more to share in satisfaction and enjoyment with the rest of my fellow-creatures.

Many thanks, my much esteemed friend, for your kind letters; but why will you make me run the risk of being contemptible and mercenary in my own eyes? When I pique myself on my independent spirit, I hope it is neither poetic licence nor poetic rant: and I am so flattered with the honour you have done me, in making me your compeer in friendship and friendly correspondence, that I cannot without pain and a degree of mortification be reminded of the real inequality between our situations.

Most sincerely do I rejoice with you, dear Madam, in the good news of Anthony. Not only your anxiety about his fate, but my own esteem for such a noble, warm-hearted, manly young fellow, in the little I had of his acquaintance, has interested me deeply in his fortunes.

Falconer, the unfortunate author of the "Shipwreck," which you so much admire, is no more. After weathering the dreadful catastrophe he so feelingly describes in his poem, and after weathering many hard gales of fortune, he went to the bottom with the *Aurora* frigate! I forget what part of Scotland had the honour of giving him birth; but he was the son of obscurity and misfortune.* He was one of those daring adventurous spirits which Scotland, beyond any other country, is remarkable for producing. Little does the fond mother think, as she hangs delighted over the sweet little leech at her bosom, where the poor fellow may hereafter wander, and what may be his fate. I remember a stanza in an old Scottish ballad, which, notwithstanding its rude simplicity, speaks feelingly to the heart:—

"Little did my mother think,
That day she cradled me,
What land I was to travel in,
Or what death I should die."

Old Scottish songs are, you know, a favourite study and pursuit of mine, and now I am on that subject, allow me to give you two stanzas of another old simple ballad, which I am sure will please you. The catastrophe of the piece is a poor ruined female, lamenting her fate. She concludes with this pathetic wish:—

"O that my father had ne'er on me smiled;
O that my mother had ne'er to me sung!
O that my cradle had never been rock'd;
But that I had died when I was young!

O that the grave it were my bed;
My blankets were my winding sheet;
The clocks and the worms my bedfellows a';
And O sae sound as I should sleep!"

* William Falconer, author of "The Shipwreck, a poem," was born in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh about the year 1730. See Nichol's Poets for his Life.

I do not remember in all my reading to have met with anything more truly the language of misery than the exclamation in the last line. Misery is like love; to speak its language truly, the author must have felt it.

I am every day expecting the doctor to give your little godson the small-pox. They are *rife* in the country, and I tremble for his fate. By the way, I cannot help congratulating you on his looks and spirit. Every person who sees him acknowledges him to be the finest, handsomest child he has ever seen. I am myself delighted with the manly swell of his little chest, and a certain miniature dignity in the carriage of his head, and the glance of his fine black eye, which promise the undaunted gallantry of an independent mind.

I thought to have sent you some rhymes, but time forbids. I promise you poetry until you are tired of it next time I have the honour of assuring you how truly I am, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXXXVII.

TO MR. G. S. SUTHERLAND, DUMFRIES THEATRE.

Monday Morning, 1st February, 1790.

I WAS much disappointed, my dear Sir, in wanting your most agreeable company yesterday. However, I heartily pray for good weather next Sunday; and, whatever aerial Being has the guidance of the elements, that he may take any other half dozen Sundays he pleases, and clothe them with

"Vapours and clouds and storms,
Until he terrify himself
At combustion of his own raising."

I shall see you on Wednesday forenoon. In the greatest hurry, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXXXVIII.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

ELLISLAND, *2nd February*, 1790.

No! I will not say one word about apologies and excuses for not writing to you. I am a poor damn'd, rascally gauger, condemned to gallop at least 200 miles every

week to inspect dirty ponds and yeasty barrels, and where can I find time to write to, or importance to interest, anybody? The upbraidings of my conscience, nay, the upbraidings of my wife, have persecuted me on your account these two or three months past. I wish to God I was a great man, that my correspondence might throw light upon you to let the world see what you really are; and then I would make your fortune without putting my hand in my pocket for you, which, like all other great men, I suppose I would avoid as much as possible. What are you doing, and how are you doing? Have you lately seen any of my few friends? What has become of the Borough Reform? or how is the fate of my poor namesake, Mademoiselle Burns, decided?* Which of their grave lordships can lay his hand on his heart, and say that he has not taken advantage of such frailty? Nay, if we may judge by near 6000 years' experience, can the world do without such frailty? O Man! but for thee and thy selfish appetites and dishonest artifices, that beauteous form, and that once innocent and still ingenuous mind, might have shone conspicuous and lovely in the faithful wife and the affectionate mother: and shall the unfortunate sacrifice to thy pleasures have no claim on thy humanity? As for those flinty-bosomed, puritanical prosecutors of female frailty, and persecutors of female charms—I am quite sober—I am dispassionate—to show that I am so, I shall mend my pen ere I proceed. It is written, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" so I neither say "G— curse them!" nor "G— blast them!" nor "G— damn them!" but, may Woman curse them! may Woman blast them! may Woman damn them! . . . And when many years and much port, and great business, have delivered them over to vulture gouts and aspen palsies, then may they be tantalised with the impotent desires, which like ghosts haunt their bosoms, when all their powers to give or receive enjoyment are for ever asleep in the sepulchre of their fathers!!!

Now for business. Our book society owe you still £1 4*s.*: a friend of mine will, I suppose, have given you some money for me (it is about £3 10*s.* or so), from which pay yourself the Monkland Friendly Society's account, and likewise Mr. Neilson's account, and send me a copy of it. The gentleman that will have given you the money will be Mr. Allan Masterton, writing master in Carrubber's Close. I saw lately in a Review some extracts from a new poem called "The Village Curate," I think; send it me. I want likewise a cheap copy of "The World." Mr. Armstrong, the young poet, who does me the honour to mention me so kindly in his works, please give him my best thanks for the copy of his book. I shall write him my first leisure hour. I like his poetry much, but I think his style in prose quite astonishing.

What is become of that veteran in Genius, Wit, and B . . dry, Smellie, and his book? Give him my compliments. Does Mr. Graham of Gartmore ever enter your shop now? He is the noblest instance of great talents, great fortune, and great worth, that ever I saw in conjunction.

Remember me to Mrs. Hill; and believe me to be, my dear Sir, ever yours,

R. B.

* Miss Burns, a frail lady, in Edinburgh, of great beauty, whom Bailie Creech condemned to be drummed out of town—against which she protested. See Kay's Portraits.

No. CCXXXIX.

TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, 9*th February*, 1790.

My Dear Sir,

That d-mned mare of yours is dead. I would freely have given her price to have saved her; she has vexed me beyond description. Indebted as I was to your goodness beyond what I can ever repay, I eagerly grasped at your offer to have the mare with me. That I might at least show my readiness in wishing to be grateful, I took every care of her in my power. She was never crossed for riding above half a score of times by me, or in my keeping. I drew her in the plough, one of three, for one poor week. I refused 55 shillings for her, which was the highest bode I could squeeze for her. I fed her up and had her in fine order for Dumfries fair; when four or five days before the fair, she was seized with an unaccountable disorder in the sinews, or somewhere in the bones of the neck, with a weakness or total want of power in her fillets; and in short the whole vertebræ of her spine seemed to be diseased and unhinged, and in eight-and-forty hours, in spite of the two best farriers in the country, she died, and be d-mned to her! The farriers said that she had been quite strained in the fillets beyond cure before you had bought her; and that she, poor devil, though she might keep a little flesh, had been jaded and quite worn out with fatigue and oppression. While she was with me, she was under my own eye; and I assure you, my much valued friend, every thing was done for her that could be done; and the accident has vexed me to the heart. In fact, I could not pluck up spirits to write you, on account of the unfortunate business.

There is little new in this country. Our theatrical company, of which you must have heard, leave us in a week. Their merit and character are indeed very great,

both on the stage and in private life; not a worthless creature among them; and their encouragement has been accordingly. Their usual run is from eighteen to twenty-five pounds a night; seldom less than the one, and the house will hold no more than the other. There have been repeated instances of sending away six, and eight, and ten pounds in a night, for want of room. A new theatre is to be built by subscription; the first stone is to be laid on Friday first to come: 300 guineas have been raised by thirty subscribers, and thirty more might have been got if wanted. The manager, Mr. Sutherland, was introduced to me by a friend from Ayr; and a worthier or cleverer fellow I have rarely met with. Some of our clergy have slipt in by stealth now and then; but they have got up a farce of their own. You must have heard how the Rev. Mr. Lawson of Kirkmahoe, seconded by the Rev. Mr. Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate and Rev. Mr. Heron of Kirkgunyeon, that in ordaining Mr. Neilson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he, the said Heron, feloniously and treasonably bound the said Neilson to the Confession of Faith, "*so far as it is agreeable to reason and the word of God!*"

Mrs. B. begs to be remembered most gratefully to you. Little Bobby and Frank are charmingly well and healthy. I am jaded to death with fatigue. For these two or three months, on an average, I have not ridden less than 200 miles per week. I have done little in the poetic way. I have given Mr. Sutherland two prologues, one of which was delivered last week. I have likewise strung four or five barbarous stanzas, to the tune of Chevy Chase, by way of elegy on your poor unfortunate mare, beginning (the name she got here was Peg Nicholson),

"Peg Nicholson was a good bay mare,
As ever trode on airn;
But now she 's floating down the Nith,
And past the mouth o' Cairn."*

My best compliments to Mrs. Nicol, and little Neddy, and all the family. I hope Ned is a good scholar, and will come out to gather nuts and apples with me next harvest. I am ever, my dearest Friend, yours,

R. B.

No. CCXL.

TO MR. WILLIAM BURNS, SADDLER, NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

My Dear William,

I would have written you sooner, but I have mislaid Mr. Murdoch's letter, and cannot for my life lay my hand on it; so I cannot write him for want of a direction. If I find it afterwards, I will write him and enclose it to you in London. Now that you are setting out for that place, put on manly resolve, and determine to persevere; and in that case you will less or more be sure of success. One or two things allow me to particularize to you. London swarms with worthless wretches, who prey on their fellow-creatures' thoughtlessness or inexperience. Be cautious in forming connections with comrades and companions. You can be pretty good company to yourself, and you cannot be too shy of letting any body know you further than to know you as a saddler. Another caution: I give you great credit for your sobriety with respect to that universal vice, bad women. It is an impulse the hardest to be restrained; but if once a man accustoms himself to gratification of that impulse, it is then nearly or altogether impossible to restrain it. W——g is a most ruinous, expensive species of dissipation. Is spending a poor fellow's money, with which he ought to clothe and support himself, nothing? W——g has ninety-nine chances in a hundred to bring on a man the most nauseous and excruciating diseases to which human nature is liable. Are disease and an impaired constitution trifling considerations? All this independent of the criminality of it.

I have gotten the Excise division, in the middle of which I live. Poor little Frank is this morning at the height in the small-pox. I got him inoculated, and I hope he is in a good way.

Write me before you leave Newcastle, and as soon as you reach London. In a word, if ever you be, as perhaps you may be, in a strait for a little ready cash, you know my direction. I shall not see you beat while you fight like a man. Farewell! God bless you!

Ellisland, 10*th February*, 1790. R. B.

No. CCXLI.

TO DR. MUNDELL, DUMFRIES.

Ellisland, *Tuesday Morning.*

Dear Doctor,

The bearer, Janet Nievison, is a neighbour, and occasionally a labourer of mine. She has got some complaint in her shoulder, and wants me to find out a Doctor that will cure her, so I have sent her to you. You will remember that she is just in the jaws of matrimony, so for heaven's sake, get her "hale and sound" as soon as possible. We are all pretty well; only the little boy's sore mouth has again inflamed Mrs. B.'s nipples. I am, yours,

February, 1790. R. B.

* See vol. i. p. 173.

No. CCXLII.

TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., WRITER, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 13*th February*, 1790.

I BEG your pardon, my dear and much valued friend, for writing to you on this very unfashionable, unsightly sheet—

"My poverty but not my will consents."

But to make amends—since modish post I have none except one poor widowed half-sheet of gilt, which lies in my drawer among my plebeian foolscap pages like the widow of a man of fashion, whom that unpolite scoundrel, Necessity, has driven from Burgundy and Pine-apple to a dish of Bohea with the scandal-bearing help-mate of a village priest; or a glass of whisky-toddy with a ruby-nosed yoke-fellow of a foot-padding excise-man—I make a vow to enclose this sheetful of epistolary fragments in that my only scrap of gilt paper.

I am indeed your unworthy debtor for three friendly letters. I ought to have written to you long ere now, but it is a literal fact, I have not almost a spare moment. It is not that I *will* not write to you; Miss Burnet is not more dear to her guardian angel, nor his grace of Queensberry to the powers of darkness, than my friend Cunningham to me. It is not that I *cannot* write you; should you doubt it, take the following fragment, which was intended for you some time ago, and be convinced that I can *antithesize* sentiment and *circumvolute* periods as well as any coiner of phrase in the regions of philology.

December, 1789.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

WHERE are you? And what are you doing? Can you be that son of levity, who takes up a friendship as he takes up a fashion; or are you, like some other of the worthiest fellows in the world, the victim of indolence, laden with fetters of ever-increasing weight?

What strange beings we are! Since we have a portion of conscious existence, equally capable of enjoying pleasure, happiness, and rapture, or of suffering pain, wretchedness, and misery, it is surely worthy of inquiry, whether there be not such a thing as a science of life; whether method, economy, and fertility of expedients be not applicable to enjoyment; and whether there be not a want of dexterity in pleasure, which renders our little scantling of happiness still less; and a profuseness, an intoxication in bliss, which leads to satiety, disgust, and self-abhorrence. There is not a doubt but that health, talents, character, decent competency, respectable friends, are real and substantial blessings; and yet do we not daily see those who enjoy many or all of these good things, and notwithstanding contrive to be as unhappy as others to whose lot few of them have fallen? I believe one great source of this mistake or misconduct is owing to a certain stimulus, with us called ambition, which goads us up the hill of life—not as we ascend other eminences, for the laudable curiosity of viewing an extended landscape, but rather for the dishonest pride of looking down on others of our fellow-creatures, seemingly diminutive, in humbler stations, &c.

Sunday, 14*th February*, 1790.

God help me! I am now obliged to

"Join night to day, and Sunday to the week."

If there be any truth in the orthodox faith of these churches, I am d-mned past redemption, and what is worse, d-mned to all eternity. I am deeply read in Boston's "Fourfold State," Marshall "on Sanctification," Guthrie's "Trial of a Saving Interest," &c., &c.; but "there is no balm in Gilead, there is no physician there" for me; so I shall e'en turn Arminian, and trust to "sincere though imperfect obedience."

Tuesday, 16*th*.

Luckily for me I was prevented from the discussion of the knotty point at which I had just made a full stop. All my fears and cares are of this world; if there is another, an honest man has nothing to fear from it. I hate a man that wishes to be a Deist; but I fear, every fair, unprejudiced inquirer must in some degree be a Sceptic. It is not that there are any very staggering arguments against the immortality of man; but like electricity, phlogiston, &c., the subject is so involved in darkness, that we want data to go upon. One thing frightens me much; that we are to live for ever seems *too good news to be true*. That we are to enter into a new scene of existence, where, exempt from want and pain, we shall enjoy ourselves and our friends without satiety or separation—how much should I be indebted to any one who could fully assure me that this was certain!

"Tell us, ye dead! will none of you in pity
To those you left behind, reveal the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be!"

My time is once more expired. I will write to Mr. Cleghorn soon. God bless him and all his concerns! And may all the powers that preside over conviviality and friendship, be present with all their kindest influence, when the bearer of this, Mr. Syme, and you meet! I wish I could also make one. I think we should be Trinity in Unity.

Finally, brethren, farewell! Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gentle, whatsoever things are charitable, whatsoever things are kind, think on these things, and think on

R. B

No. CCXLIII.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

ELLISLAND, *2nd March*, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

AT a late meeting of the Monkland Friendly Society, it was resolved to augment the Library by the following books which you are to send as soon as possible —*The Mirror*, *The Lounger*, "Man of Feeling," "Man of the World," (these, for my own sake, I wish to have by the first carrier); Knox's "History of the Reformation;" Rae's "History of the Rebellion in 1715;" any good History of the Rebellion, 1745; "A Display of the Secession Act and Testimony," by Mr. Gib; Hervey's "Meditations;" Beveridge's "Thoughts;" and another copy of Watson's "Body of Divinity." This last heavy performance is so much admired by many of our members, that they will not be content with one copy; so Captain Riddell, our president and patron, agreed with me to give you private instructions not to send *Watson*, but to say that you could not procure a copy of the book so cheap as the one you sent formerly, and therefore, you wait further orders.

I wrote to Mr. A. Masterton three or four months ago, to pay some money he owed me into your hands, and lately I wrote to you to the same purpose, but I have heard from neither one nor other of you.

In addition to the books I commissioned in my last, I want very much "An Index to the Excise Laws, or an Abridgment of all the Statutes now in force, relative to the Excise," by Zellinger Symons. I want three copies of this book; if it is now to be had, cheap or dear, get it for me. An honest country neighbour of mine wants too a Family Bible, the larger the better, but second-handed; for he does not choose to give above ten shillings for the book. I want likewise for myself, as you can pick them up, second-handed or anything cheap, copies of Otway's Dramatic Works, Ben Jonson's Do.; Dryden's, Congreve's, Wycherley's, Vanbrugh's, Cibber's; or any dramatic works of the more modern Macklin, Garrick, Foote, Colman, or Sheridan. A good copy, too, of Molière in French I much want. Any other good French dramatic authors in their native language, I want these: I mean comic authors chiefly, though I should wish Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire too. I am in no hurry for all or any of these, but if you accidentally meet with them very cheap, get them for me.

And now, to quit the dry walk of business, how do you do, my dear friend? and how is Mrs. Hill? I trust, if now and then not so *elegantly* handsome, at least as amiable, and sings as divinely as ever. My good wife too has a charming "wood-note wild;" now could we four get anyway snugly together in a corner in the New Jerusalem (remember I bespeak your company there), you and I—though Heaven knows we are no singers—yet, as we are all to have harps you know, we shall continue to support the ladies' pipes, as we have oft done before, with all the powers of our instruments.

I am out of all patience with this vile world for one thing. Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures, except in a few scoundrelly instances. I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have is born with us; but we are placed here amid so much nakedness and hunger, and poverty and want, that we are under a damning necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may EXIST! Still there are in every age a few souls that all the wants and woes of life cannot debase to selfishness, or even give the necessary alloy of caution and prudence. If ever I am in danger of vanity, it is when I contemplate myself on this side of my disposition and character. God knows I am no saint; I have a whole host of follies and sins to answer for; but if I could (and I believe I do it as far as I can), I would "wipe away all tears from all eyes." Even the knaves who have injured me, I would oblige them; though, to tell the truth, it would be more out of vengeance, to shew them that I was independent of and above them, than out of the overflowings of my benevolence. Adieu!

R. B.

No. CCXLIV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *10th April*, 1790.

I HAVE just now, my ever honoured friend, enjoyed a very high luxury, in reading a paper of the *Lounger*. You know my national prejudices. I had often read and admired the *Spectator*, *Adventurer*, *Rambler*, and *World;* but still with a certain regret that they were so thoroughly and entirely English. Alas! have I often said to myself, what are all the boasted advantages which my country reaps from the Union, that can counterbalance the annihilation of her independence, and even her very name! I often repeat that couplet of my favourite poet, Goldsmith—

> ——"States of native liberty possest,
> Tho' very poor, may yet be very blest."

Nothing can reconcile me to the common terms, "English ambassador," "English court," &c. And I am out of all patience to see that equivocal character, Hastings, impeached by "the Commons of *England*." Tell me, my friend, is this weak prejudice? I believe in my conscience such ideas as "my country; her independence; her honour; the illustrious names that mark

the history of my native land, &c., I believe these, among your *men of the world*, men who, in fact, guide for the most part and govern our world, are looked on as so many modifications of wrong-headedness. They know the use of bawling out such terms to rouse or lead THE RABBLE; but for their own private use, with almost all the *able statesmen* that ever existed or now exist, when they talk of right and wrong they only mean proper and improper; and their measure of conduct is, not what they OUGHT, but *what they dare*. For the truth of this I shall not ransack the history of nations, but appeal to one of the ablest judges of men that ever lived—the celebrated Earl of Chesterfield.* In fact, a man who could thoroughly control his vices whenever they interfered with his interests, and who could completely put on the appearance of every virtue as often as it suited his purposes, is, on the Stanhopian plan, the *perfect man*—a man to lead nations. But are great abilities, complete without a flaw and polished without a blemish, the standard of human excellence? This is certainly the staunch opinion of *men of the world;* but I call on honour, virtue, and worth, to give the Stygian doctrine a loud negative! However, this must be allowed, that, if you abstract from man the idea of an existence beyond the grave, *then*, the true measure of human conduct is *proper* and *improper;* virtue and vice, as dispositions of the heart, are in that case of scarcely the same import and value to the world at large as harmony and discord in the modifications of sound; and a delicate sense of honour, like a nice ear for music, though it may sometimes give the possessor an ecstacy unknown to the coarser organs of the herd, yet, considering the harsh gratings and inharmonic jars in this ill-tuned state of being, it is odds but the individual would be as happy, and certainly would be as much respected by the true judges of society as it would then stand, without either a good ear or a good heart.

You must know I have just met with the *Mirror* and *Lounger* for the first time, and I am quite in raptures with them; I should be glad to have your opinion of some of the papers. The one I have just read (*Lounger*, No. 61) has cost me more honest tears than anything I have read for a long time. Mackenzie has been called "the Addison of the Scots," and, in my opinion, Addison would not be hurt at the comparison. If he has not Addison's exquisite humour, he as certainly out-does him in the tender and the pathetic. His "Man of Feeling" (but I am not counsel learned in the laws of criticism) I estimate as the first performance of the kind I ever saw. From what book, moral or even pious, will the susceptible young mind receive impressions more congenial to humanity and kindness, generosity and benevolence; in short, more of all that ennobles the soul to herself or endears her to others—than from the simple, affecting tale of poor Harley?

Still, with all my admiration of Mackenzie's writings, I do not know if they are the fittest reading for a young man who is about to set out, as the phrase is, to make his way into life. Do not you think, Madam, that among the few favoured of Heaven in the structure of their minds (for such there certainly are), there may be a purity, a tenderness, a dignity, an elegance of soul, which are of no use, nay, in some degree, absolutely disqualifying for the truly important business of making a man's way into life? If I am not much mistaken, my gallant young friend Anthony is very much under these disqualifications; and for the young females of a family I could mention, well may they excite parental solicitude, for I, a common acquaintance, or as my vanity will have it, an humble friend, have often trembled for a turn of mind which may render them eminently happy—or peculiarly miserable!

I have been manufacturing some verses lately; but as I have got the most hurried season of Excise business over, I hope to have more leisure to transcribe anything that may show how much I have the honour to be, Madam,

Yours, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXLV.

TO MR. ALEX. FINDLATER, DUMFRIES.

DEAR SIR,

MRS. B., like a true good wife, looking on my taste as a standard, and knowing that she cannot give me anything eatable more agreeable than a new-laid egg, she begs your acceptance of a few. They are all of them *couch*, not thirty hours out.

I am, dear Sir, your obliged, humble servant,

R. B.

ELLISLAND, *Saturday Morning.*

No. CCXLVI.

TO DR. MOORE.

EXCISE OFFICE, DUMFRIES, 14*th July*, 1790.

SIR,

COMING into town this morning to attend my duty in this office, it being collection day, I met with a gentle-

* Author of the well-known letters to his son.

man who tells me he is on his way to London; so I take the opportunity of writing to you, as franking is at present under a temporary death.* I still have some snatches of leisure through the day, amid our horrid business and bustle, and I shall improve them as well as I can; but let my letter be as stupid as . . . . as miscellaneous as a newspaper, as short as a hungry grace-before-meat, or as long as a law-paper in the Douglas cause; as ill-spelt as country John's billet-doux, or as unsightly a scrawl as Betty Byre-mucker's answer to it; I hope, considering circumstances you will forgive it; and as it will put you to no expense of postage, I shall have the less reflection about it.

I am sadly ungrateful in not returning you my thanks for your most valuable present, "Zeluco." In fact, you are in some degree blameable for my neglect. You were pleased to express a wish for my opinion of the work, which so flattered me that nothing less could serve my overweening fancy than a formal criticism on the book. In fact, I have gravely planned a comparative view of you, Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, in your different qualities and merits as novel writers. This, I own, betrays my ridiculous vanity, and I may probably never bring the business to bear; but I am fond of the spirit young Elihu shows in the book of Job—"And I said, I will also declare my opinion." I have quite disfigured my copy of the book with my annotations. I never take it up without at the same time taking my pencil, and marking with asterisms, parentheses, &c., wherever I meet with an original thought, a nervous remark on life and manners, a remarkably well turned period, or a character sketched with uncommon precision.

Though I shall hardly think of fairly writing out my "Comparative View," I shall certainly trouble you with my remarks, such as they are.

I have just received from my gentleman that horrid summons in the book of Revelation—that "time shall be no more!"

The little collection of sonnets have some charming poetry in them.† If *indeed* I am indebted to the fair author for the book, and not, as I rather suspect, to a celebrated author of the other sex, I should certainly have written to the lady, with my grateful acknowledgments, and my own ideas of the comparative excellence of her pieces. I would do this last, not from any vanity of thinking that my remarks could be of much consequence to Mrs. Smith, but merely from my own feelings as an author, doing as I would be done by.

R. B.

* As an election for the Dumfries Burghs was then pending, there was not an M. P. to grant a frank.

† Charlotte Smith was a well-known novelist and poet. Her works are now nearly forgotten.

No. CCXLVII.

TO MR. MURDOCH, TEACHER OF FRENCH, LONDON.‡

ELLISLAND, 16*th July*, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR,

I RECEIVED a letter from you a long time ago, but unfortunately, as it was in the time of my peregrinations and journeyings through Scotland, I mislaid or lost it, and by consequence your direction along with it. Luckily, my good star brought me acquainted with Mr. Kennedy, who, I understand, is an acquaintance of yours; and by his means and mediation I hope to replace that link which my unfortunate negligence had so unluckily broke in the chain of our correspondence. I was the more vexed at the vile accident, as my brother William, a journeyman saddler, has been for some time in London, and wished above all things for your direction, that he might have paid his respects to his father's friend.

His last address he sent to me was "Wm. Burns, at Mr. Barber's, saddler, No. 181 Strand." I wrote him by

‡ "This letter," says Cromek, in his Reliques, "was communicated to the Editor by a gentleman, to whose liberal advice and information he is much indebted, Mr. John Murdoch, the tutor of the poet; accompanied by the following interesting note:"—

LONDON, HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY, 28*th December*, 1807.

DEAR SIR,

THE following letter, which I lately found among my papers, I copy for your perusal, partly because it is Burns's; partly because it makes honourable mention of my rational Christian friend, his father; and likewise because it is rather flattering to myself. I glory in no one thing so much as an intimacy with good men—the friendship of others reflects no honour. When I recollect the pleasure (and I hope benefit), I received from the conversation of William Burns, especially when on the Lord's day we walked together for about two miles, to the house of prayer, there publicly to adore and praise the Giver of all good, I entertain an ardent hope, that together we shall "renew the glorious theme in distant worlds," with powers more adequate to the mighty subject, THE EXUBERANT BENEFICENCE OF THE GREAT CREATOR. But to the letter:—[*Here follows the letter relative to young Wm. Burns.*]

I promised myself a deal of happiness in the conversation of my dear young friend; but my promises of this nature generally prove fallacious. Two visits were the utmost that I received. At one of them, however, he repeated a lesson which I had given him about twenty years before, when he was a mere child, concerning the pity and tenderness due to animals. To that lesson (which it seems was brought to the level of his capacity) he declared himself indebted for almost all the philanthropy he possessed.

Let not parents and teachers imagine that it is needless to talk seriously to children. They are sooner fit to be reasoned with than is generally thought. Strong and indelible impressions are to be made before the mind be agitated and ruffled by the numerous train of distracting cares and unruly passions, whereby it is frequently rendered almost unsusceptible of the principles and precepts of rational religion and sound morality.

But I find myself digressing again. Poor William! then in the bloom and vigour of youth, caught a putrid fever, and, in a few days, as real chief mourner, I followed his remains to the land of forgetfulness.

JOHN MURDOCH.

Mr. Kennedy, but neglected to ask him for your address; so, if you find a spare half minute, please let my brother know by a card where and when he will find you, and the poor fellow will joyfully wait on you as one of the few surviving friends of the man whose name, and Christian name too, he has the honour to bear.

The next letter I write you shall be a long one. I have much to tell you of "hair-breadth 'scapes in th' imminent deadly breach," with all the eventful history of a life, the early years of which owed so much to your kind tutorage; but this at an hour of leisure. My kindest compliments to Mrs. Murdoch and family. I am ever, my dear Sir, your obliged friend,

R. B.*

* To the above letter Mr. Murdoch returned the following answer:—

HART STREET, BROOMSBURY SQUARE,
LONDON, *September*, 14*th*. 1790.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOURS of the 16th of July I received on the 26th, in the afternoon, per favour of my friend Mr. Kennedy, and at the same time was informed that your brother was ill. Being engaged in business till late that evening, I set out next morning to see him, and had thought of three or four medical gentlemen of my acquaintance, to one or other of whom I might apply for advice, provided it should be necessary. But when I went to Mr. Barber's, to my great astonishment and heartfelt grief, I found that my young friend had, on Saturday, bid an everlasting farewell to all sublunary things. It was about a fortnight before that he had found me out, by Mr. Stevenson's accidentally calling at my shop to buy something. We had only one interview, and that was highly entertaining to me in several respects. He mentioned some instruction I had given him when very young, to which he said he owed, in a great measure, the philanthropy he possessed. He also took notice of my exhorting you all, when I wrote, about eight years ago, to the man who, of all mankind that I ever knew, stood highest in my esteem, "not to let go your integrity." You may easily conceive that such conversation was both pleasing and encouraging to me: I anticipated a deal of rational happiness from future conversations. Vain are our expectations and hopes. They are so almost always—perhaps (nay, certainly) for our good. Were it not for disappointed hopes we could hardly spend a thought on another state of existence, or be in any degree reconciled to the quitting of this.

I know of no one source of consolation to those who have lost young relatives equal to that of their being of a good disposition, and of a promising character.

. . . . . .

Be assured, my dear friend, that I cordially sympathize with you all, and particularly with Mrs. Wm. Burness, who is undoubtedly one of the most tender and affectionate mothers that ever lived. Remember me to her in the most friendly manner, when you see her or write. Please present my best compliments to Mrs. R. Burns, and to your brother and sisters. There is no occasion for me to exhort you to filial duty; and to use your united endeavours in rendering the evening of life as comfortable as possible to a mother who has dedicated so great a part of it in promoting your temporal and spiritual welfare.

Your letter to Dr. Moore I delivered at his house, and shall most likely know your opinion of "Zeluco," the first time I meet with him. I wish and hope for a long letter. Be particular about your mother's health. I hope she is too much a Christian to be afflicted above measure, or to sorrow as those who have no hope.

One of the most pleasing hopes I have is to visit you all; but I am commonly disappointed in what I most ardently wish for. I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

No. CCXLVIII.

TO WILLIAM TYTLER, Esq., OF WOODHOUSELEE.

LAWN-MARKET, 1790.†

SIR,

ENCLOSED I have sent you a sample of the old pieces that are still to be found among our peasantry in the West. I had once a great many of such fragments, and some of these more entire; but as I had no idea that any body cared for them, I have forgotten them. I invariably hold it sacrilege to add anything of my own to help out with the shattered wrecks of these venerable old compositions; but they have many various readings. If you have not seen these before, I know they will flatter your true old-style Caledonian feelings; at any rate, I am truly happy to have an opportunity of assuring you how sincerely I am, revered Sir, your gratefully indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCXLIX.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, Esq., DRUMLANRIG.

ELLISLAND, 2*nd August*, 1790.

SIR,

Now that you are over with the Sirens of Flattery, the Harpies of Corruption, and the Furies of Ambition—those infernal deities that on all sides, and in all parties, preside over the villanous business of Politics—permit a rustic Muse of your acquaintance to do her best to soothe you with a song.

You knew Henderson‡—I have not flattered his memory. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCL.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 8*th August*, 1790.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER a long day's toil, plague, and care, I sit down to write to you. Ask me not why I have delayed it so long. It was owing to hurry, indolence, and fifty

† The date should be 1787.

‡ In this letter the Poet enclosed his Elegy on the Death of Captain Matthew Henderson. See vol. i. p. 178.

other things; in short, to anything but forgetfulness of *la plus aimable de son sexe*. By-the-bye, you are indebted your best curtsey to me for this last compliment, as I pay it from my sincere conviction of its truth—a quality rather rare in compliments of these grinning, bowing, scraping times.

Well, I hope writing to *you* will ease a little my troubled soul. Sorely has it been bruised to-day! A *ci-devant* friend of mine, and an intimate acquaintance of yours, has given my feelings a wound that I perceive will gangrene dangerously ere it cure.* He has wounded my pride!

R. B.

No. CCLI.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, Esq., WRITER, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, *8th August*, 1790.

Forgive me, my once dear, and ever dear friend, my seeming negligence. You cannot sit down and fancy the busy life I lead.

I laid down my goose feather to beat my brains for an apt similе, and had some thoughts of a country grannum at a family christening; a bride on the market-day before her marriage; an orthodox clergyman at a Paisley sacrament; an Edinburgh bawd on a Sunday evening; or a tavern-keeper at an election dinner, &c., &c. But the resemblance that hits my fancy best is that blackguard miscreant, Satan, who, as Holy Writ tells us, roams about like a roaring lion, seeking, *searching* whom he may devour. However, tossed about as I am, if I chuse (and who would not chuse?) to bind down with the crampets of attention the brazen foundation of integrity, I may rear up the superstructure of Independence, and from its daring turrets bid defiance to the storms of fate. And is this not a "consummation devoutly to be wished?"

> "Thy spirit, Independence, let me share;
> Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye!
> Thy steps I follow with my bosom bare,
> Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky!"

Are not these noble verses? They are the introduction of Smollett's "Ode to Independence:" if you have not seen the poem I will send it to you. How wretched is the man that hangs on by the favours of the great! To shrink from every dignity of man at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel glitter and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and perhaps not so well formed as thou art—came into the world a puling infant as thou didst, and must go out of it, as all men must, a naked corse,

. . . . . .

R. B.

* Who the "friend" was, and the circumstances of the case, are not known.

No. CCLII.

TO DR. ANDERSON.†

1790.

Sir,

I am much indebted to my worthy friend Dr. Blacklock for introducing me to a gentleman of Dr. Anderson's celebrity; but when you do me the honour to ask my assistance in your proposed publication, alas, Sir! you might as well think to cheapen a little honesty at the sign of an advocate's wig, or humility under the Geneva band. I am a miserable hurried devil, worn to the marrow in the friction of holding the noses of the poor publicans to the grindstone of the Excise! and like Milton's Satan, for private reasons, am forced "To do what yet, tho' damn'd, I would abhor;" and except a couplet or two of honest execration,

. . . . . .

R. B.

No. CCLIII.

TO MISS H. CRAIK,‡ ARBIEGLAND.

Ellisland, *August*, 1790.

Madam,

Some rather unlooked-for accidents have prevented me from doing myself the honour of a second visit to Arbiegland, as I was so hospitably invited, and so positively meant to have done. However, I still hope to have that pleasure before the busy months of harvest begin.

I enclose you two of my late pieces, as some kind of

† Not Dr. Robert Anderson, Editor of the Poets; but Dr. James Anderson, Editor of *The Bee*, who had asked Burns' aid to it.—See Life.

‡ Miss Craik of Arbiegland, a good poet and novelist, an enthusiast, and ultimately a solitaire, died in Allonby.

return for the pleasure I have received in perusing a certain MS. volume of poems in the possession of Captain Riddel. To repay one with an *old song* is a proverb whose force you, Madam, I know, will not allow. What is said of illustrious descent is, I believe, equally true of a talent for poesy—none ever despised it who had any pretensions to it. It is often a train of mine when I am disposed to be melancholy—the fates and characters of the rhyming tribe. There is not, among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer, but how they are formed to bear. Take a being of our kind, give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility, which between them will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary, such as arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows, in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of wanton butterflies—in short, send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; lastly, fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity, and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet. To you, Madam, I need not recount the fairy pleasures the muse bestows to counterbalance this catalogue of evils. Bewitching poesy is like bewitching woman; she has in all ages been accused of misleading mankind from the counsels of wisdom and the paths of prudence, involving them in difficulties, baiting them with poverty, branding them with infamy, and plunging them in the whirling vortex of ruin; yet where is the man but must own that all our happiness on earth is not worth the name—that even the holy hermit's solitary prospect of paradisiacal bliss is but the glitter of a northern sun rising over a frozen region, compared with the many pleasures, the nameless raptures, that we owe to the lovely Queen of the heart of Man!

R B.

No. CCLIV.

TO MR. DAVID NEWALL, WRITER, DUMFRIES.

September, 1790.

Dear Sir,

Enclosed is a state of the account between you and me and James Halliday respecting the drain. I have stated it at 20*d*. per rood, as, in fact even at that, they have not the wages they ought to have had, and I cannot for the soul of me see a poor devil a loser at my hand.

Humanity, I hope, as well as Charity, will cover a multitude of sins, a mantle, of which—between you and me—I have some little need. I am, Sir, yours,

R. B.

No. CCLV.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq., OF FINTRY.

Dumfries, Globe Inn,
4th September, 1790.

Sir,

The very kind letter you did me the honour to write me reached me just as I was setting in to the whirpool of an Excise-fraud court, from the vortex of which I am just emerged—Heaven knows, in a very unfit situation to do justice to the workings of my bosom when I sit down to write to the

"Friend of my life, true patron of my rhymes."

As my division consists of ten large parishes, and I am sorry to say, hitherto very carelessly surveyed, I had a good deal of business for the Justices; and I believe my decreet will amount to between fifty and sixty pounds. I took, I fancy, rather a new way with my frauds; I recorded every defaulter, but at the court I myself begged off every poor body that was unable to pay, which seeming candour gave me so much implicit credit with the honourable Bench, that with high compliments they gave me such ample vengeance on the rest, that my *decreet* is double the amount of any division in the district.

I am going either to give up or subset my farm directly. I have not liberty to subset; but if my master will grant it me, I propose giving it, just as I have it myself, to an industrious fellow, a near relation of mine. Farming in this place in which I live would just be a livelihood to a man who would be the greatest drudge in his own family, so is no object; and living here hinders me from that knowledge in the Excise which it is absolutely necessary for me to attain.

I did not like to be an incessant beggar from you. A port-division I wish, if possible, to get; my kind, my funny friend, Captain Grose, offered to interest Mr. Brown, and perhaps Mr. Wharton, for me: a very handsome opportunity offered of getting Mr. Corbet, supervisor-general, to pledge every service in his power; and then I was

just going to acquaint you with what I had done, or rather what was done for me, that as all have their own particular friends to serve, you might find less obstacle in what, I assure you, Sir, I constantly count on—your wishes and endeavours to be of service to me. As I had an eye to getting on the examiner's list, if attainable by me, I was going to ask you if it would be of any service to try the interest of some great, and some *very* great folks, to whom I have the honour to be known—I mean in the way of a Treasury warrant. But much as early impressions have given me of the horrors of spectres, &c., still I would face the arch-fiend, in Miltonic pomp, at the head of all his legions, and hear that infernal shout which blind John says "tore hell's concave," rather than crawl in, a dust-licking petitioner, before the lofty presence of a mighty man, and bear, amid all the mortifying pangs of self-annihilation, the swelling consequence of his d—d state, and the cold monosyllables of his hollow heart!

It was in the view of trying for a port, that I asked Collector Mitchell to get me appointed, which he has done, to a vacant foot-walk in Dumfries. If ever I am so fortunate as to be called out to do business as a supervisor, I would then choose the north of Scotland; but until that Utopian period, I own I have some wayward feelings of appearing as a simple gauger in a country where I am only known by fame. Port-Glasgow, Greenock, or Dumfries ports would, in the meantime, be my ultimatum.

I enclose you a tribute I have just been paying to the memory of my friend, Matthew Henderson, whom I daresay you must have known. I had acknowledged your goodness sooner, but for want of time to transcribe the poem. Poor Matthew! I can forgive Poverty for hiding virtue and piety. They are not only plants that flourish best in the shade, but they also produce their sacred fruits, more especially for another world; but when the haggard beldam throws her invidious veil over wit, spirit, &c. . . . but I trust another world will cast light on the subject.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply obliged and very humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCLVI.

TO ALEX. FERGUSSON, Esq., J.P.

GLOBE INN, NOON, *Wednesday, September*, 1790.

"Blessed be he that kindly doth
The poor man's case consider."

I HAVE sought you all over the town, good Sir, to learn what you have done, or what can be done, for poor Robie Gordon. The hour is at hand when I must assume the execrable office of whipper-in to the bloodhounds of Justice, and must let loose the carrion sons of . . . on poor Robie. I think you can do something to save the unfortunate man, and am sure, if you can, you will. I know that Benevolence is supreme in your bosom, and has the first voice in, and the last check on, all you do; but that insidious . . . Politics, may . . . the honest cully Attention, until the practicable moment of doing good is no more. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCLVII.

TO COLLECTOR MITCHELL, DUMFRIES.

ELLISLAND, 1790.

SIR,

I SHALL not fail to wait on Captain Riddel to night. I wish and pray that the goddess of Justice herself would appear to-morrow among our hon. gentlemen, merely to give them a word in their ear that mercy to the thief is injustice to the honest man. For my part I have galloped over my ten parishes these four days, until this moment that I am just alighted, or rather, that my poor jackass-skeleton of a horse has let me down; for the miserable devil has been on his knees half a score of times within the last twenty miles, telling me in his own way, "Behold, am not I thy faithful jade of a horse, on which thou hast ridden these many years!"

In short, Sir, I have broke my horse's wind, and almost broke my own neck, besides some injuries in a part that shall be nameless, owing to a hard-hearted stone of a saddle. I find that every offender has so many great men to espouse his cause, that I shall not be surprised if I am committed to the strong hold of the law to-morrow, for insolence to the dear friends of the gentlemen of the country. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble

R. B.

No. CCLVIII.

TO CRAUFORD TAIT, Esq., W.S., EDINBURGH,

SON OF MR. TAIT OF HARVIESTON.*

ELLISLAND, 15*th October*, 1790.

DEAR SIR,

ALLOW me to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Mr. William Duncan, a friend of mine, whom I

* See LIFE.

have long known and long loved. His father, whose only son he is, has a decent little property in Ayrshire, and has bred the young man to the law, in which department he comes up an adventurer to your good town. I shall give you my friend's character in two words: as to his head, he has talents enough, and more than enough, for common life; as to his heart, when Nature had kneaded the kindly clay that composes it, she said, "I can no more."

You, my good Sir, were born under kinder stars; but your fraternal sympathy, I well know, can enter into the feelings of the young man, who goes into life with the laudable ambition to *do* something, and to *be* something among his fellow-creatures; but whom the consciousness of friendless obscurity presses to the earth, and wounds to the soul!

Even the fairest of his virtues are against him. That independent spirit, and that ingenuous modesty, qualities inseparable from a noble mind, are with the million circumstances not a little disqualifying. What pleasure is in the power of the fortunate and the happy, by their notice and patronage, to brighten the countenance and glad the heart of such depressed youth! I am not so angry with mankind for their deaf economy of the purse—the goods of this world cannot be divided without being lessened; but why be a niggard of that which bestows bliss on a fellow-creature, yet takes nothing from our own means of enjoyment? We wrap ourselves up in the cloak of our own better fortune, and turn away our eyes, lest the wants and woes of our brother-mortals should disturb the selfish apathy of our souls!

I am the worst hand in the world at asking a favour.* That indirect address, that insinuating implication, which, without any positive request, plainly expresses your wish, is a talent not to be acquired at a plough-tail. Tell me then, for you can, in what periphrasis of language, in what circumvolution of phrase, I shall envelop, yet not conceal, this plain story:—"My dear Mr. Tait, my friend Mr. Duncan, whom I have the pleasure of introducing to you, is a young lad of your own profession, and a gentleman of much modesty and great worth. Perhaps it may be in your power to assist him in the, to him, important consideration of getting a place; but at all events, your notice and acquaintance will be a very great acquisition to him, and I dare pledge myself that he will never disgrace your favour."

You may possibly be surprised, Sir, at such a letter from me; 'tis, I own, in the usual way of calculating these matters, more than our acquaintance entitles me to; but my answer is short. Of all the men at your time of life, whom I knew in Edinburgh, you are the most accessible on the side on which I have assailed you. You are very much altered indeed from what you were when I knew you, if generosity point the path you will not tread, or humanity call to you in vain.

As to myself—a being to whose interest I believe you are still a well-wisher—I am here breathing at all times, thinking sometimes, and rhyming now and then. Every situation has its share of the cares and pains of life, and my situation I am persuaded has a full ordinary allowance of its pleasures and enjoyments.

My best compliments to your father and Miss Tait. If you have an opportunity, please remember me in the solemn league and covenant of friendship to Mrs. Lewis Hay.† I am a wretch for not writing to her; but I am so hackneyed with self-accusation in that way, that my conscience lies in my bosom with scarce the sensibility of an oyster in its shell. Where is Lady M'Kenzie? wherever she is, God bless her! I likewise beg leave to trouble you with compliments to Mr. Wm. Hamilton, Mrs. Hamilton and family, and Mrs. Chalmers, when you are in that country. Should you meet with Miss Nimmo, please remember me to her.

R. B.

No. CCLIX.

TO PROF. DUGALD STEWART, EDINBURGH.

PER FAVOUR OF CAPTAIN GROSE.

ELLISLAND, *October*, 1790.

SIR,

I WILL be extremely happy if this letter shall have the honour of introducing you to Captain Grose, a gentleman whose acquaintance you told me you so much coveted. I enclose this to him, and should his pursuits lead him again to Ayrshire, and should his time, and (what I am sorry to say is more precarious) his health permit, I have no doubt but you will have the mutual pleasure of being acquainted. I am, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCLX.

TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ., F.S.A.‡

1790.

SIR,

I BELIEVE among all our Scots literati you have not met with Professor Dugald Stewart, who fills the moral philosophy chair in the University of Edinburgh. To

* This same letter suffices to show he could dexterously ask a favour.

† Formerly Miss Margaret Chalmers. ‡ See LIFE.

say that he is a man of the first parts, and, what is more, a man of the first worth, to a gentleman of your general acquaintance, and who so much enjoys the luxury of unencumbered freedom and undisturbed privacy, is not perhaps recommendation enough; but when I inform you that Mr. Stewart's principal characteristic is your favourite feature—*that* sterling independence of mind which, though every man's right, so few men have the courage to claim, and fewer still the magnanimity to support; when I tell you that, unseduced by splendour, and undisgusted by wretchedness, he appreciates the merits of the various actors in the great drama of life merely as they perform their parts—in short, he is a man after your own heart, and I comply with his earnest request in letting you know that he wishes above all things to meet with you. His house, Catrine, is within less than a mile of Sorn Castle, which you proposed visiting; or if you could transmit him the enclosed, he would, with the greatest pleasure, meet you anywhere in the neighbourhood. I write to Ayrshire to inform Mr. Stewart that I have acquitted myself of my promise. Should your time and spirits permit your meeting with Mr. Stewart, 'tis well; if not, I hope you will forgive this liberty, and I have at least an opportunity of assuring you with what truth and respect, I am, Sir, your great admirer and very humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCLXI.

TO FRANCIS GROSE, Esq., F.S.A.*

1790.

Among the many witch-stories I have heard relating to Alloway Kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three:—

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind and bitter blasts of hail—in short, on such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in—a farmer, or farmer's servant was plodding and plashing homeward with his plough-irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighbouring smithy. His way lay by the Kirk of Alloway; and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching a place so well known to be a favourite haunt of the devil, and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering, through the horrors of the storm and stormy night, a light, which on his nearer approach plainly showed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above on his devout supplication, as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan; or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not pretend to determine: but so it was that he ventured to go up to, nay, into the very kirk. As luck would have it, his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle or cauldron, depending from the roof over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c., for the business of the night. It was in for a penny in for a pound, with the honest ploughman; so without ceremony he unhooked the cauldron from off the fire, and, pouring out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head, and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family, a living evidence of the truth of the story.

Another story,† which I can prove to be equally authentic, was as follows:—

On a market day in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Alloway kirk-yard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards farther on than the said gate, had been detained by his business, till by the time he reached Alloway it was the wizard hour—between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well-known fact that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirk-yard, he was surprised and entertained, through the ribs and arches of an old Gothic window, which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer, stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of his acquaintance and neighbourhood. How the gentleman was dressed tradition does not say; but that the ladies were all in their smocks; and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purposes of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out, with a loud laugh, "Weel luppen, Maggie wi' the short sark!" and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse at the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running

* This was first published in the "Censura Literaria," a work edited by the late Sir Egerton Brydges. It was found among Grose's papers.

† The foundation, it is hardly necessary to say, of "Tam o' Shanter."

stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for nothwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing, vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprang to seize him. But it was too late; nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning; but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tail-less condition of the vigorous steed was, to the last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers not to stay too late in Ayr Markets.

The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former with regard to the scene; but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd boy, belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighbourhood of Alloway kirk, had just folded his charge, and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling stems of the plant Ragwort. He observed, that as each person pulled a Ragwort, he or she got astride of it, and called out, "up, horsie!" on which the Ragwort flew off, like Pegasus, through the air with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his Ragwort, and cried, with the rest, "up, horsie!" and strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopt was a merchant's wine cellar in Bordeaux, where, without saying by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford, until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter, and frightened them from their carousals.

The poor shepherd lad, being equally a stranger to the scene and the liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk; and when the rest took horse, he fell asleep and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the merchant. Somebody, who understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale. I am, &c., &c.,

R. B.

No CCLXII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *November*, 1790.

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country."

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow which I have received. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice." For me *to sing* for joy is no new thing, but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy. How could such a mercurial creature as a poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend? I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod—an instrument indispensably necessary—in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs. Little's is a more elegant, but not a more sincere compliment to the sweet little fellow, than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses:—

"Sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love,
And ward o' mony a prayer," &c.*

I am much flattered by your approbation of my "Tam o' Shanter," which you express in your former letter; though, by-the-bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many, to all of which I plead "not guilty!" Your book is, I hear, on the road to reach me.† As to the printing of poetry, when you prepare it for the press you have only to spell it right, and place the capital letters properly; as to the punctuation, the printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of "Tam o' Shanter" ready to send you by the first opportunity; it is too heavy to send by post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately. He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favour me soon with an account of your young folk; if Mrs. H. is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.

R. B.

No. CCLXIII.

TO WILLIAM DUNBAR, ESQ., W.S.

ELLISLAND, 17*th January*, 1791.

I AM not gone to Elysium, most noble Colonel,‡ but am still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by

* See vol. i. p. 184.

† Alluding to some sketches of her own, which Mrs. Dunlop was then printing for private circulation.

‡ Mr. Dunbar was styled Colonel of the Crochallan corps. See LIFE.

propagating his image, and honouring my king by begetting him loyal subjects.

Many happy returns of the season await my friend. May the thorns of Care never beset his path! May Peace be an inmate of his bosom, and Rapture a frequent visitor of his soul! May the bloodhounds of Misfortune never track his steps, nor the screech-owl of Sorrow alarm his dwelling! May Enjoyment tell thy hours, and Pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the bard! Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee!

As a further proof that I am still in the land of existence, I send you a poem, the latest I have composed. I have a particular reason for wishing you only to show it to select friends, should you think it worthy a friend's perusal; but if, at your first leisure hour, you will favour me with your opinion of, and strictures on, the performance, it will be an additional obligation on, dear Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCLXIV.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, 17*th January*, 1791.

Take these three guineas, and place them over against that damned account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months! I can as little write good things as write apologies to the man I owe money to. O the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five! Not all the labours of Hercules; not all the Hebrews' three centuries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an infernal task!

Poverty! thou half-sister of Death, thou cousin-german of Hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to thy demerits? By thee, the venerable Ancient, though in this insidious obscurity grown hoary in the practice of every virtue under heaven, now laden with years and wretchedness, implores from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud, a little, little aid to support his very existence, and is by him denied and insulted. By thee the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes in bitterness of soul under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. By thee the man of Genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected and his person despised, while shallow Greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of Worth that have reason to complain of thee; the children of Folly and Vice, though in common with thee the offspring of Evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education is condemned as a fool for his dissipation; despised and shunned as a needy wretch when his follies, as usual, have brought him to want; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country.

But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early extravagances and follies are fire and spirit; *his* consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he sets out with a legal commission to plunder distant provinces and massacre peaceful nations, he returns laden with the spoils of rapine and murder, lives wicked and respected, and dies a Villain and a Lord. Nay, worst of all—alas for helpless woman! the needy wretch who was shivering at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is ridden down by the chariot wheels of the Coroneted Rip, hurrying on to the adulterous assignation; she who, without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade!

Well, divines may say of it what they please; but I maintain that a hearty blast of execration is to the mind what breaking a vein is to the body; the overloaded sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations. I feel myself vastly easier than when I began my letter, and can now go on to business. You will be so good then as send, by the first Dumfries carrier, all, or as many as you have by you, of the following books. I am, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCLXV.

TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, Esq., EDINBURGH.

Ellisland, 23*rd January*, 1791.

Many happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend! As many of the good things of this life as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil in the cup of Being!

I have just finished a poem—Tam o' Shanter—which

you will receive enclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have these several months been hammering away at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet. I have got, and can get, no farther than the following fragment, on which please give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition, I set great store by your opinion; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the Holy Father than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

ELEGY ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO.*

"Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies," &c. †

Let me hear from you soon. Adieu!

R. B.

No. CCLXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, *7th February*, 1791.

WHEN I tell you, Madam, that by a fall, not from my horse, but with my horse, I have been a cripple for some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better, and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease; as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet of Monboddo. I had the honour of being pretty well acquainted with her, and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance, as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's works was no more. I have as yet gone no farther than the following fragment, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, that any new idea on the business is not to be expected; 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last, you will judge from what follows.

"The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care," &c.‡

I have proceeded no further.

* Miss Burnet died of consumption, 17th June, 1790.

† See vol. i. p. 184.

‡ Additional stanza of Elegy on Miss Burnet of Monboddo. See vol. i. p. 184.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. This last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the smallpox and measles over, has cut several teeth, and never yet had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear farther from, Madam, yours,

R. B.

No. CCLXVII.

TO THE REV. ARCHIBALD ALISON.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES,
14th February, 1791.

SIR,

YOU must by this time have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honour to present me with a book, which does honour to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up, forsooth, a deep-learned digest of strictures on a composition of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, Sir, that, at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock, and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith. In short, Sir, except Euclid's Elements of Geometry, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fireside in the winter evenings of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas

as your "Essay on the Principles of Taste." One thing, Sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon merit in the work—I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I enclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition. The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale. I am, Sir, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCLXVIII.

TO THE REV. G. H. BAIRD, LONDON.*

ELLISLAND, 1791.

WHY did you, my dear Sir, write to me in such a hesitating style on the business of poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt the many ills, the peculiar ills that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; and had your letter been so directed as to have reached me sooner (it only came to my hand this moment), I should have directly put you out of suspense on the subject. I only ask that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as the subscription bills, may bear that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies, and backslidings (anybody but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse appellation), that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain to do any good that occurs in my very limited power to a fellow creature, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of retrospection.

R. B.

No. CCLXIX.

TO MRS. GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

ELLISLAND, *February*, 1791.

MADAM,

WHETHER it is that the story of our Mary, Queen of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have in the enclosed ballad † succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a good while past; on that account I enclose it particularly to you. It is true, the purity of my motives may be suspected. I am already deeply indebted to Mr. Graham's goodness; and, what *in the usual ways of men* is of infinitely greater importance, Mr. G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog; and however I may occasionally pick a better bone than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor: but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty; and without any fustian affectation of spirit, I can promise and affirm, that it must be no ordinary craving of the latter shall ever make me do any thing injurious to the honest fame of the former. Whatever may be my failings, for failings are a part of human nature, may they ever be those of a generous heart and an independent mind. It is no fault of mine that I was born to dependence, nor is it Mr. Graham's chiefest praise that he can command influence: but it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother, but with the politeness of a gentleman; and I trust it shall be mine, to receive with thankfulness, and remember with undiminished gratitude.

R. B.

No. CCLXX.

TO DR. JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

ELLISLAND, 27*th February*, 1791.

I DO not know, Sir, whether you are a subscriber to Grose's "Antiquities of Scotland." If you are, the enclosed poem will not be altogether new to you.‡

* Afterwards Principal Baird, who had written Burns anent a new edition of Bruce's poems.

† See vol. i. p. 185.

‡ Dr. Moore thus replied:—

DEAR SIR, LONDON, 29*th March*, 1791.

YOUR letter of the 28th February I received only two days ago, and this day I had the pleasure of waiting on the Rev. Mr. Baird, at the Duke of Athole's, who had been so obliging as to transmit it to me, with the printed verses on Alloa Church, the Elegy on Captain Henderson, and the Epitaph. There are many poetical beauties in the former; what I particularly admire are the three striking similes from

"Or like the snow falls on the river,"

and the eight lines which begin with

"By this time he was cross the ford,"

so exquisitely expressive of the superstitious impressions of the country. And the twenty-two lines from

"Coffins stood round like open presses,"

which, in my opinion, are equal to the ingredients of Shakspeare's cauldron in "Macbeth."

Captain Grose did me the favour to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view; it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all your goodness to the rustic bard; and also of shewing you, that the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson,"* is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as Roman Catholics; they can be of service to their friends after they have passed that bourne where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I fear, very problematical: but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and as a very orthodox text, I forget where in Scripture. says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still more dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary† was begun while I was busy with "Percy's Reliques of English poetry." By the way, how much is every honest heart, which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice, obliged to you for your glorious story of "Buchanan and Targe." 'Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving "Targe" the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.

. . . . . .

I have just read over, once more of many times, your "Zeluco." I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one or two, I think, which with humble deference I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson, indeed, might perhaps be excepted; but unhappily his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world; and, however they may captivate the inexperienced, romantic fancy of a boy or girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn; the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence: so soon as the prince's friends had got in (and every dog you know has his day), my getting forward in the excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am; and as to my boys, poor little fellows! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life as I could wish, I shall, if I am favoured so much by the

As for the "Elegy," the chief merit of it consists in the graphical description of the objects belonging to the country in which the poet writes, and which none but a Scottish poet could have described, and none but a real poet and close observer of Nature could have so described.

There is something original and wonderfully pleasing in the "Epitaph."

I remember you once hinted before, what you repeat in your last, that you had made some remarks on "Zeluco," on the margin. I should be very glad to see them, and regret you did not send them before the last edition, which is just published. Pray transcribe them for me; I sincerely value your opinion very highly, and pray do not suppress one of those in which you *censure* the sentiment or expression. Trust me it will break no squares between us—I am not akin to the Bishop of Grenada.

I must now mention what has been on my mind for some time; I cannot help thinking you imprudent in scattering abroad so many copies of your verses. It is most natural to give a few to confidential friends, particularly to those who are connected with the subject, or who are perhaps themselves the subject, but this ought to be done under promise not to give other copies. Of the poem you sent me on Queen Mary, I refused every solicitation for copies, but I lately saw it in a newspaper. My motive for cautioning you on this subject is that I wish to engage you to collect all your fugitive pieces, not already printed, and after they have been reconsidered, and polished to the utmost of your power, I would have you publish them by another subscription; in promoting of which I will exert myself with pleasure.

In your future compositions I wish you would use the modern English. You have shown your powers in Scottish sufficiently. Although in certain subjects it gives additional zest to the humour, yet it is lost to the English; and why should you write only for a part of the island, when you can command the admiration of the whole?

If you chance to write to my friend, Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, I beg to be affectionately remembered to her. She must not judge of the warmth of my sentiments respecting her by the number of my letters. I hardly ever write a line but on business; and I do not know that I should have scribbled all this to you, but for the business part of it; that is, to instigate you to a new publication, and to tell you that, when you think you have a sufficient number to make a volume, you should set your friends on getting subscriptions. I wish I could have a few hours' conversation with you; I have many things to say, which I cannot write. If I ever go to Scotland I will let you know, that you may meet me at your own house, or my friend Mrs. Hamilton's, or both.

Adieu! my dear Sir, &c.

* See vol. i. p. 178.

† See vol. i. p. 185.

Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors this is one of the best, *Better be the head o' the commonality, than the tail o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject which, however interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honour to be, Yours &c.

R. B.

Written on the blank leaf of a book, which I presented to a very young lady, whom I had formerly characterized under the denomination of "The Rose Bud."*

R. B.

No. CCLXXI.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,

WITH A EWE-MILK CHEESE.

ELLISLAND, 1791.

MY DEAR HILL,

I SHALL say nothing at all to your mad present.† You have long and often been of important service to me, and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the meantime, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great-coats for mourning, so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and hell. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful knavery, and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of self-important folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate that it chokes me in the gullet; and the *pulvilised*, feathered, pert coxcomb is so horrible in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for you patience and a bit of my Cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There, in my eye, is our friend Smellie; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with; when you see him, as, alas! he too often is smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstances, aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness—a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him; but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

Candlish, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David,‡ with his *Courant*, comes, too, across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those damn'd bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned; so, a fresh egg is a very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory, it does not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious little friend Colonel Dunbar I would wish also to be a partaker: not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps.§

Among our common friends I must not forget one of the dearest of them—Cunningham. The brutality, insolence, and selfishness of a world unworthy of having such a fellow as he in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest John Somerville, he is such a contented, happy man, that I know not what can annoy him, except, perhaps, he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of law, I shall have nothing to do with them professionally—the faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their clients, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy I pass by: their profundity of erudition and their liberality of sentiment, their total want of pride and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honour to call friend, the Laird of Craigdarroch; but I have spoken to the landlord of the King's-Arms inn here, to have at the next county meeting a large ewe-milk cheese on the table for the benefit of the Dumfries-shire

* See the "Lines to Miss Cruikshank, a very young Lady," vol. i. p. 128.
† A present of books.
‡ Mr. David Ramsay, printer of the *Edinburgh Evening Courant.*
§ A club of choice spirits.

Whigs, to enable them to digest the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage. So God bless you!

R. B.

No. CCLXXII.

TO MR. ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, WRITER,

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, 11*th March*, 1791.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

I RECEIVED your *first* letter two days ago; the last came to hand this moment. I was highly delighted with the well carried on allegory in your friend's letter. I read it to two or three acquaintances who have souls to enjoy a good thing, and we had a very hearty laugh at it. I have felt along the line of my Muse's inclination, and I fear your Archery subject would be up-hill work with her. I have two or three times in my life composed from the wish, rather than from the impulse, but I never succeeded to any purpose. One of these times I shall ever remember with gnashing of teeth. 'Twas on the death of the late Lord President Dundas. My very worthy and most respected friend, Mr. Alexander Wood, Surgeon, urged me to pay a compliment in the way of my trade to his Lordship's memory. Well, to work I went, and produced a copy of Elegiac verses, some of them I own rather common-place, and others rather hide-bound; but on the whole, though they were far from being in my best manner, they were tolerable, and might have been thought very clever. I wrote a letter, which, however, *was* in my very best manner; and enclosing my poem, Mr. Wood carried all together to Mr. Solicitor Dundas that then was, and not finding him at home, left the parcel for him. His Solicitorship never took the smallest notice of the letter, the Poem, or the Poet. From that time, highly as I respect the talents of their family, I never see the name Dundas in the column of a newspaper, but my heart seems straitened for room in my bosom; and if I am obliged to read aloud a paragraph relating to one of them, I feel my forehead flush, and my nether lip quiver. Had I been an obscure scribbler, as I was then in the hey-day of my fame; or had I been a dependent hanger-on for favour or pay; or had the bearer of the letter been any other than a gentleman who has done honour to the city in which he lives, to the country that produced him, and to the God that created him, Mr. Solicitor might have had some apology—but enough of this ungracious subject.

A friend of mine who transcribed the last parcel I sent you is to be with me in a day or two, and I shall get him to copy out the two poems you mention. I have this evening sketched out a song which I had a great mind to send you, though I foresee that it will cost you another groat of postage—by the way, you once mentioned to me a method of franking letters to you, but I have forgot the direction. My song is intended to sing to a strathspey or reel, of which I am very fond, called in Cumming's collection of strathspeys, "Ballendalloch's Reel," and in other collections that I have met with it is known by the name of "Camdelmore." It takes three stanzas of four lines each to go through the whole tune. I shall give the song to Johnson for the fourth volume of his publication of Scots songs, which he has just now in hand.

"Sweet are the banks—the banks o' Doon,
The spreading flowers are fair, &c." *

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures, let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have just composed always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an author will ever view his own works. I believe, in general, novelty has something in it that inebriates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient, as usual, with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced, in the revolution of many a hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my parish priest, who is in himself one vast Constellation of dulness, and from his weekly Zenith rays out his contradictory stupidity to the no small edification and enlightening of the heavy and opaque pericraniums of his gaping admirers, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition, which will appear in Johnson's work, as well as the former.

You must know a beautiful Jacobite air, "There 'll never be peace 'till Jamie comes hame." When political combustion ceases to be the object of princes and patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of historians and poets.

"By yon castle wa', at the close of the day,
I heard a man sing, tho' his head it was grey, &c." †

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to "the memory of joys that are past," to the few friends whom you indulge in

* See vol. i. p. 112. † See vol. i. p. 186.

that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

"That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane."

So good night to you! And sound be your sleep and delectable your dreams! Apropos, how do you like this thought in a ballad I have just now on the tapis?

"I look to the west when I gae to rest,
That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be," &c.†

Good night once more, and God bless you!

R. B.

No. CCLXXIII.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, Esq., AYR.

March, 1791.

While here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound, "Auld Toon o' Ayr," conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr. Ballantine. Here it is—

"Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair," &c.†

R. B.

No. CCLXXIV.

TO MR. ALEXANDER DALZIEL,‡ FACTOR,
FINDLAYSTON HOUSE.

Ellisland, 19*th March*, 1791.

My Dear Sir,

I have taken the liberty to frank this letter to you, as it encloses an idle poem of mine, which I send you; and, God knows, you may perhaps pay dear enough for it if you read it through. Not that this is my own opinion; but an author, by the time he has composed and corrected his works, has quite pored away all his powers of critical discrimination.

I can easily guess from my own heart, what you have felt on a late most melancholy event. God knows what I have suffered at the loss of my best friend, my first, my dearest patron and benefactor; the man to whom I owe all that I am and have! I am gone into mourning for him, and with more sincerity of grief than I fear some will, who by nature's ties ought to feel on the occasion.

I will be exceedingly obliged to you indeed, to let me know the news of the noble family, how the poor mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to Lady Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper. I see by the same channel that the honoured remains of my noble patron are designed to be brought to the family burial place. Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country, and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression.

R. B.

No. CCLXXV.

TO LADY ELIZABETH CUNNINGHAM.§

Ellisland, *March*, 1791.

My Lady,

I would, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late benefactor, I determined to make that the first piece I should do myself the honour of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardour of my heart, the enclosed had been much more worthy your perusal: as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your Ladyship's feet.‖ As all the world knows my obligations to the late Earl of Glencairn, I would wish to show as openly that my heart glows, and shall ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his Lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honour to wear to his Lordship's memory were not the "mockery of woe." Nor shall my gratitude perish with me! If, among my children I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honour and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn!

I was about to say, my Lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other, give it to the world.

R. B.

* See vol. i. p. 214.
† See vol. i. pp. 112, 113, and 202 for different versions of this song.
‡ Mr. Dalziel was factor to Lord Glencairn. See Life.
§ Sister of the Earl of Glencairn: she died unmarried in August, 1804.
‖ "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn." See vol. i. p. 186.

No. CCLXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 11*th April*, 1791.

I AM once more able, my honoured friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered — joy and sorrow; for on Saturday morning last Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine boy, rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed I look on your little namesake to be my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on Tam o' Shanter to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery, that might perhaps be as well spared; but then they also show in my opinion a force of genius, and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge.* That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels, that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation, and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven, I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such an humble one as mine, we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence. As fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever; rustic, native grace; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity; nature's mother wit, and the rudiments of taste; a simplicity of soul, unsuspicious of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world; and the dearest charm of all the rest, a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return. These, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution, which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

* The birth took place only two days before. The child was named William Nicol, after his friend in Edinburgh.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made. Do let me hear, by first post, how *cher petit Monsieur* comes on with his small-pox. May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him!

R. B.

No. CCLXXVII.

TO ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.

ELLISLAND, *April*, 1791.

SIR,

Nothing less than the unfortunate accident I have met with, could have prevented my grateful acknowledgments for your letters.† His own favourite poem, and

† The following is the letter to which the above is a reply:—

DEAR SIR,

MR. HILL yesterday put into my hands a sheet of "Grose's Antiquities," containing a poem of yours, entitled, "Tam o' Shanter," a tale. The very high pleasure I have received from the perusal of this admirable piece, I feel, demands the warmest acknowledgments. Hill tells me he is to send off a packet for you this day; I cannot resist, therefore, putting on paper what I must have told you in person had I met with you after the recent perusal of your tale, which is, that I feel I owe you a debt, which if undischarged, would reproach me with ingratitude. I have seldom in my life tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius, than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken, if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation. In the introductory part, where you paint the character of your hero, and exhibit him at the alehouse *ingle*, with his tippling cronies, you have delineated nature with a humour and *naïveté*, that would do honour to Matthew Prior; but when you describe the infernal orgies of the witches' sabbath, and the hellish scenery in which they are exhibited, you display a power of imagination that Shakspeare himself could not have exceeded. I know not that I have ever met with a picture of more horrible fancy than the following:—

> "Coffins stood round like open presses,
> That shawed the dead in their last dresses;
> And, by some devilish cantrip slight,
> Each in its cauld hand held a light."

But when I came to the succeeding lines my blood ran cold within me—

> "A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
> Whom his ain son of life bereft,
> *The grey hairs yet stack to the heft.*"

And here, after the two following lines "Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu," &c., the descriptive part might perhaps have been better closed than the four lines which succeed, which, though good in themselves, yet, as they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, are here rather misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror. The initiation of the young witch is most happily described—the effect of her charms exhibited in the dance of Satan himself—the apostrophe, "Ah little thought thy reverend grannie!"—the transport of Tam, who forgets his situation, and enters completely into the spirit of the scene —are all features of high merit in this excellent composition. The only fault it possesses is, that the winding-up or conclusion of the story is not commensurate to the interest which is excited by the

that an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to him, where consequently his hopes and fears were on the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt—to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges, was the most delicious vibration that ever thrilled along the heart-strings of a poor poet. However, Providence, to keep up the proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there; one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out; as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce, it cannot easily be remedied. Your approbation, Sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCLXXVIII.

TO CHARLES SHARPE, Esq., OF HODDAM,*

UNDER A FICTITIOUS SIGNATURE, ENCLOSING A BALLAD.

Ellisland, 22*nd April*, 1791.

It is true, Sir, you are a gentleman of rank and fortune, and I am a poor devil; you are a feather in the cap of society, and I am a very hobnail in his shoes; yet I have the honour to belong to the same family with you, and on that score I now address you. You will perhaps suspect that I am going to claim affinity with the ancient and honourable house of Kirkpatrick. No, no, Sir; I cannot indeed be properly said to belong to any house, or even any province or kingdom; as my mother, who for many years was spouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this bad world, aboard the packet-boat, somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our common family I mean, Sir, the family of the Muses. I am a fiddler and a poet; and you, I am told, play an exquisite violin, and have a standard taste in the *Belles Lettres*. The other day, a brother-catgut gave me a charming Scots air of your composition.† If I was pleased with the tune, I was in raptures with the title you have given it; and taking up the idea I have spun it into the three stanzas enclosed. Will you allow me, Sir, to present you them, as the dearest offering that a misbegotten son of Poverty and Rhyme has to give! I have a longing to take you by the hand, and unburden my heart by saying: "Sir, I honour you as a man who supports the dignity of human nature amid an age when frivolity and avarice have, between them, debased us below the brutes that perish!" But, alas! Sir, to me you are unapproachable. It is true the Muses baptized me in Castalian streams; but the thoughtless gipsies forgot to give me a name. As the sex have served many a good fellow, the Nine have given me a great deal of pleasure; but, bewitching jades! they have beggared me. Would they but spare me a little of their cast linen, were it only to put it in my power to say that I have a shirt on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solomon's lilies, "they toil not, neither do they spin;" so I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a cravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-coloured fragments. As to the affair of shoes, I have given that up. My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes too, are what not even the hide of Job's Behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more; I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat indeed is a great favourite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of fac-totum servant to a country clergyman, where I pickt up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on the one side, and my fiddle-case on the other, and placing my hat between my legs, I can, by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the conic sections.

descriptive and characteristic painting of the preceding parts. The preparation is fine, but the result is not adequate. But for this perhaps you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale.

And now that I have got out my mind, and feel a little relieved of the weight of that debt I owed you, let me end this desultory scroll by an advice:—You have proved your talent for a species of composition in which but a very few of our own poets have succeeded. Go on—write more tales in the same style—you will eclipse Prior and La Fontaine; for with equal wit, equal power of numbers, and equal *naïveté* of expression, you have a bolder and more vigorous imagination.

* In Dumfries-shire. Father of Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq., distinguished for his antiquarian lore.

† Mr. Sharpe wrote verses, as well as composed music.

However, Sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much forsaken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and amid all my rags and poverty I am as independent, and much more happy, than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt, and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect. As you, Sir, go through your rôle with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that with the highest respect, I have the honour to be, &c.,

JOHNNY FAA.

No. CCLXXIX.

TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL CONSTABLE.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES,
25*th April*, 1791.

MY LADY,

NOTHING less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm, could have prevented me, the moment I received your Ladyship's elegant present by Mrs. Miller,* from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your Ladyship, I shall set it apart—the symbols of religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of others, I shall recollect your Ladyship; when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary. I enclose your Ladyship a poetic compliment I lately paid to the memory of our greatly injured, lovely Scottish Queen. I have the honour to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's highly obliged and ever devoted, humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCLXXX.

TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, OF ULBSTER, BART.

ELLISLAND, 1791.

SIR,

THE following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account transmitted to you of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale.† I beg leave to send it to you, because it is new and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge is certainly of very great importance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides, raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddel, Esq., of Glenriddel, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artizan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddel got a number of his own tenants and farming neighbours, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings; and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry-money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase was always decided by the majority. At every meeting all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood for that night first on the list, had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second, and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting was last at this; he who had been second was first, and so on through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr. Riddel's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of

* A valuable snuff-box, with a beautiful miniature of Mary Queen of Scots on the lid.

† In few quarters, it must be confessed, have the clergy shown much sympathy with schemes of this sort.

this little library, were Blair's "Sermons," Robertson's "History of Scotland," Hume's "History of the Stuarts," *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, "Man of Feeling," "Man of the World," "Chrysal," "Don Quixote," "Joseph Andrews," &c. A peasant who can read and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbour, who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success, I am, Sir, your humble servant,

A Peasant.

No. CCLXXXI.

TO . . . . . .

Ellisland, 1791.

Dear Sir,

I am exceedingly to blame in not writing you long ago; but the truth is, that I am the most indolent of all human beings, and when I matriculate in the Herald's Office, I intend that my supporters shall be two sloths, my crest a slow-worm, and the motto, "De'il tak' the foremost." So much by way of apology for not thanking you sooner for your kind execution of my commission.

I would have sent you the poem;* but somehow or other it found its way into the public papers, where you must have seen it.

. . . . . .

I am ever, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

R. B.

No. CCLXXXII.

TO . . . . . .†

Ellisland, 1791.

Thou eunuch of language: thou Englishman, who never was south of the Tweed: thou servile echo of fashionable barbarisms: thou quack, vending the nostrums of empirical elocution: thou marriage-maker between vowels and consonants, on the Gretna-green of caprice: thou cobbler, botching the flimsy socks of bombast oratory: thou blacksmith, hammering the rivets of absurdity: thou butcher, embruing thy hands in the bowels of orthography: thou arch-heretic in pronunciation: thou pitch-pipe of affected emphasis: thou carpenter, mortising the awkward joints of jarring sentences: thou squeaking dissonance of cadence: thou pimp of gender: thou Lyon Herald to silly etymology: thou antipode of grammar: thou executioner of construction: thou brood of the speech-distracting builders of the Tower of Babel: thou lingual confusion worse confounded: thou scape-gallows from the land of syntax: thou scavenger of mood and tense: thou murderous accoucheur of infant learning: thou *ignis fatuus*, misleading the steps of benighted ignorance: thou pickle-herring in the puppet-show of nonsense: thou faithful recorder of barbarous idiom: thou persecutor of syllabication: thou baleful meteor, foretelling and facilitating the rapid approach of Nox and Erebus.

R. B.

No. CCLXXXIII.

TO MR. ALEX. FINDLATER, SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE.‡

Ellisland, *June*, 1791.

Dear Sir,

I am both much surprised and vexed at that accident of Lorimer's stock. The last survey I made prior to Mr. Lorimer's going to Edinburgh, I was very particular in my inspection, and the quantity was certainly in his possession, as I stated it. The surveys I made during his absence might as well have been marked "Key absent," as I never found any body but the lady, who I know is not mistress of keys, &c., to know anything of it, and one of the times it would have rejoiced all Hell to have seen her so drunk. I have not surveyed there since his return. I know the gentleman's ways are, like the grace of G—, past all comprehension; but I shall give the house a severe scrutiny to-morrow morning, and send you in the naked facts.

I know, Sir, and regret deeply that this business glances with a malign aspect on my character as an officer; but as I am really innocent in the affair, and as the gentleman is known to be an illicit dealer, and particularly as this is the *single* instance of the least shadow of

* Viz., "The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots."

† We think this letter bears internal evidence of being addressed to William Nicol. The original MS. belonged to Mr. A. Henderson, surgeon, Berwick, son of the "Rosebud." It appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

‡ See Appendix, p. 125.

carelessness or impropriety in my conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice to the dark manœuvres of a smuggler. I am, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servant,

R. B.

Sunday even.

I send you some rhymes I have just finished, which tickle my fancy a little.

R. B.

No. CCLXXXIV.

TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, Esq., EDINBURGH,

INTRODUCING CLARKE THE SCHOOLMASTER.

11*th June*, 1791.

Let me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman who gives you this. He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the persecution of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to some perverse dunces that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of genius and sensibility, for such is my friend Clarke, when a blockhead father presents him his booby son, and insists on having the rays of science lighted up in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel--a fellow whom, in fact, it savours of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat School are the ministers, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh; and as the business comes now before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do everything in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius, a man of worth, and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistrates and council, though, God knows, 'tis generally a very unfit soil for good fellowship to flourish in; but particularly you have much to say with a reverend gentleman to whom you have the honour of being very nearly related, and whom this country and age have had the honour to produce.* I need not name the historian of Charles V. I tell him through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronization. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and I say it, that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and envious, causeless malice.

God help the children of dependence! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often (alas! almost unexceptionally always) received by their friends with insulting disrespect and heart-stinging reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O! to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts, rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature! Every man has his virtues, and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain-dealing of friendship, which in the hour of my calamity cannot reach forth the helping hand, without at the same time, pointing out those failings, and assigning them their share in my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls you, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do, also, spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude must be incident to human nature, do thou, Fortune, put it in my power, always from my own pocket to pay the penalty of those errors! I do not want to be independent that I may sin; but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend, Mr. Clarke, to your acquaintance and good offices; his worth entitles him to the one, and his gratitude will merit the other.

R. B.

* Cunningham was nephew to Dr. Robertson.

No. CCLXXXV.

TO THE REV. WM. MOODIE, EDINBURGH.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

This will be presented to you by a particular friend of mine, a Mr. Clarke, schoolmaster in Moffat, who has lately become the unfortunate and undeserved subject of persecution from some of his employers. The ostensible and assigned reason on their part is some instances of severity to the boys under his care; but I have had the best means of knowing the merits of the cause, and I assure you, Sir, that he is falling a sacrifice to the weakness of the many, following in the cry of the villainy of the few.

The business will now come before the patrons of the school, who are the ministers, magistrates, and town council of Edinburgh; and in that view I would interest your goodness in his behalf. 'Tis true, Sir, and I feel the full force of the observation, that a man in my powerless, humble situation very much mistakes himself, and very much mistakes the way of the world, when he dares presume to offer influence among so highly respectable a body as the patronage I have mentioned. On that—what could I do? A man of abilities, a man of genius, a man of worth, and my friend—before I would stand quietly and silent by, and see him perish thus, I would go down on my knees to the rocks and mountains, and implore them to fall on his persecutors and crush their malice and them in deserved destruction. Believe me, Sir, he is a greatly injured man.

The humblest individual, though, alas! he cannot so redress the wrong, may yet as ably attest the fact as a lord might do. Mr. Moodie's goodness I well know, and that acquaintance with him that I have the honour to boast of will forgive my addressing him thus in favour of a gentleman whom, if he knew as well, he would esteem as I do.

R. B.

No. CCLXXXVI.

LETTER DICTATED FOR CLARKE, ADDRESSED TO THE LORD PROVOST OF EDINBURGH.

MOFFAT, *June*, 1791.

MY LORD,

IT may be deemed presumption in a man obscure and unknown as I am, and entire stranger to your Lordship, to trouble you in this manner; but when I inform you that the subject on which I address you is of the last importance to me, and is so far connected with you, that on your determination, in a great measure, my fate must depend, I rely on your Lordship's goodness that you will think any further apology unnecessary.

I have been for nearly five years schoolmaster in Moffat, an appointment of which your Lordship will know, you, with the rest of the Magistracy and Town Council, together with the Clergy of Edinburgh, have the patronage. The trust with which these, my highly respectable patrons had honoured me, I have endeavoured to discharge with the utmost fidelity, and I hope with a good degree of success; but of late, one or two powerful individuals of my employers have been pleased to attack my reputation as a teacher, have threatened no less than to expel me from the school, and are taking every method, some of them, I will say it, insidious and unfair to the last degree, to put their threats in execution. The fault of which I am accused is some instances of severity to the children under my care. Were I to tell your Lordship that I am innocent of the charge—that any shade of cruelty, particularly that very black one of cruelty to tender infancy, will be allowed by every unbiassed person who knows anything of me to be tints unknown in my disposition—you would certainly look on all this *from me* as words of course; so I shall trouble you with nothing on the merits of my cause, until I have a fair hearing before my Right Hon. Patrons. A fair hearing, my Lord, is what above all things I want; and what I greatly fear will be attempted to be denied me. It is to be insinuated that I have vacated my place, that I never was legally appointed, with I know not how many pretences more, to hinder the business from coming properly before your Lordship and the other Patrons of the School—all which I deny, and will insist on holding my appointment until the dignified characters who gave it me shall find me unworthy of it.

In your Lordship's great acquaintance with human life, you must have known and seen many instances of Innocence, nay, of Merit, disguised and obscured, and sometimes for ever buried, by the dark machinations of unprincipled Malevolence and envious Craft; and until the contrary be made to appear, 'tis at least equally probable that my case is in that unfortunate and undeserved predicament. I have the honour to be, &c.,

(Signed) JAMES CLARKE.

No. CCLXXXVII.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

June, 1791.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I TAKE Glenriddel's kind offer of a corner for a postscript to you, though I have got nothing particular to tell you. It is with the greatest pleasure I learn from all hands, and particularly from your warm friend and patron, the Laird here, that you are going on, spreading and thriving like the palm-tree that shades the fragrant vale in the Holy Land of the Prophet. May

* This letter has no date in the poet's hand, but is backed in Glenriddel's, and has the Dumfries post mark "June."

the richest juices from beneath, and the dews of heaven from above, foster your root and refresh your branches, until you be as conspicuous among your fellows as the stately Goliah towering over the little pigmy Philistines around him! Amen, so be it!

R. B.

No. CCLXXXVIII.

TO MISS DAVIES,

ENCLOSING A BALLAD MADE UPON HER.

August, 1791.

MADAM,

I UNDERSTAND my very worthy neighbour, Mr. Riddel, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something in the idea of being the burden of a ballad, that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was; so my worthy friend (what I daresay he never intended) has done me a mischief, and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman who had some genius, much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental groups of social life into which one is thrown, whenever this gentleman met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his soul, he used to steal a sketch of the face; merely, he said, as a *nota bene*, to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me; and the enclosed verses I do myself the honour to send you are a *memento* exactly of the same kind. It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice than the delicacy of my taste; but I am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with the insipidity, affectation, and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person "after my own heart," I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse, than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two would be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were gray-bearded age; but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment are equally striking and unaffected—by Heavens! though I had lived threescore years a married man, and threescore years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea: and I am truly sorry that the enclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject. I have the honour to be, &c..

R. B.

No. CCLXXXIX.

TO MISS DAVIES,*

ENCLOSING A SONG INSPIRED BY HER CHARMS.

August, 1791.

IT is impossible, Madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind can have any idea of that moral disease under which I unhappily must rank as the chief of sinners; I mean a torpitude of the moral powers, that may be called a lethargy of conscience. In vain Remorse rears her horrent crest, and rouses all her snakes: beneath the deadly fixed eye and leaden hand of Indolence their wildest ire is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigours of winter in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, Madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed I had one apology—the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in Miss Davies's fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes, that to make her the subject of a silly ballad is downright mockery of these ardent feelings; 'tis like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven! why this disparity between our wishes and our powers? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest impotent and ineffectual as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desert? In my walks of life I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—"Go, be happy! I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you—or worse still, in whose hands are, perhaps, placed many of the comforts of your life. But there! ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation, and the foolish sink before your contempt; and largely impart that happiness to others which, I am certain, will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow!"

Why, dear Madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie, and find it all a dream? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless,

* See LIFE.

incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity, or of adding one comfort to the friend I love! Out upon the world! say I, that its affairs are administered so ill. They talk of reform: good Heaven! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters of men! Down immediately should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow. As for a much more formidable class, the *knaves*, I am at a loss what to do with them: had I a world, there should not be a knave in it, ... But the hand that could give, I would liberally fill: and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive, and generously love.

Still the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable; but there is a delicacy, a tenderness, accompanying every view in which we can place lovely Woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of Fortune. Woman is the blood-royal of life: let there be slight degrees of precedency among them—but let them be ALL sacred. Whether this last sentiment be right or wrong, I am not accountable: it is an original component feature of my mind. . . . .

R. B.

No. CCXC.

TO MR. THOMAS SLOAN,

CARE OF WM. KENNEDY, ESQ., MANCHESTER.

ELLISLAND, 1*st September*, 1791.

MY DEAR SLOAN,

SUSPENSE is worse than disappointment; for that reason I hurry to tell you that I just now learn that Mr. Ballantine does not choose to interfere more in the business. I am truly sorry for it, but cannot help it.

You blame me for not writing you sooner; but you will please to recollect that you omitted one little necessary piece of information—your address.

However, you know equally well my hurried life, indolent temper, and strength of attachment. It must be a longer period than the longest life "in the world's haie and undegenerate days," that will make me forget so dear a friend as Mr. Sloan. I am prodigal enough at times, but I will not part with such a treasure as that.

I can easily enter into the *embarras* of your present situation. You know my favourite quotation from Young—

> "——— On Reason build Resolve—
> That column of true majesty in man!"

And that other favourite one from Thomson's "Alfred"—

> "What proves the hero truly great,
> Is never, never to despair."

Or, shall I quote you an author of your acquaintance?

> "For whether DOING, SUFFERING, or FORBEARING,
> You may do miracles by—PERSEVERING."

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this day se'en-night past, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the roup was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting, indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor, and decanting, until both my dogs got so drunk by attending them that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene, as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

Mrs. B. and family have been in Ayrshire these many weeks.

Farewell! and God bless you, my dear friend!

R. B.

No. CCXCI.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

September, 1791.

MY LORD,

LANGUAGE sinks under the ardour of my feelings when I would thank your Lordship for the honour you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson.* In my first enthusiasm

* The invitation was couched in the following terms:—

DRYBURGH ABBEY, *June 17th*, 1791.

LORD BUCHAN has the pleasure to invite Mr. Burns to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson, on Ednam Hill, on the 22nd of September; for which day perhaps his muse may inspire an ode suited to the occasion. Suppose Mr. Burns should, leaving the Nith, go across the country, and meet the Tweed at the nearest point from his farm—and, wandering along the pastoral banks of Thomson's pure parent stream, catch inspiration on the devious walk, 'till he finds Lord Buchan sitting on the ruins of Dryburgh. There the Commendator will give him a hearty welcome, and try to light his lamp at the pure flame of native genius, upon the altar of Caledonian virtue. This poetical perambulation of the Tweed is a thought of the late Sir Gilbert Elliot, and of Lord Minto, followed out by his accomplished grandson, the present Sir Gilbert, who having been with Lord Buchan lately, the project was renewed, and will, they hope, be executed in the manner proposed.

in reading the card you did me the honour to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence, in the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on.

Your Lordship hints at an ode for the occasion; but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired. I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your Lordship with the subjoined copy of them,* which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your Lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXCII.

TO JAMES GRACIE, Esq., BANKER.

Globe Inn, 8 o'clock p.m., 1791.

Sir,

I have yours anent Crombie's† bill. Your forbearance has been very great. I did it to accommodate the thoughtless fellow. He asks till Wednesday week. If he fail, I pay it myself. In the meantime, if horning and caption be absolutely necessary, grip him by the neck, and welcome, Yours,

R. B.

No. CCXCIII.

TO MR. CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL OF EXCISE.

October, 1791.

Sir,

I have in my time taken up the pen on several ticklish subjects, but none that ever cost me half so much as the language of supplication. To lay open one's wants and woes to the mercy of another's benevolence, is a business so prostituted by the worthless and unfeeling, that a man of principle and delicacy shrinks from it as from contamination.

Mr. Findlater tells me that you wish to know from myself what are my views in desiring to exchange my excise division. With the wish natural to man of bettering his present situation, I have turned my thoughts towards the practicability of getting into a port division. As I know that the general superiors are omnipotent in these matters, my honoured friend, Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, offered me to interest you in my behalf.

She told me that she was well acquainted with Mrs. Corbet's goodness, and that, on the score of former intimacy, she thought she could promise some influence with her, and added, with her usual sagacity and knowledge of human nature, that the surest road to the good offices of a man was through the mediation of the woman he loved. On this footing, Sir, I venture my application, else not even the known generosity of your character would have emboldened me to address you thus. I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXCIV.

TO COLONEL FULLERTON OF FULLERTON.‡

Ellisland, *3rd October*, 1791.

Sir,

I have just this minute got the frank, and next minute must send it to post, else I purposed to have sent you two or three other bagatelles that might have amused a vacant hour about as well as "Six excellent new songs," or the "Aberdeen prognostications for the year to come." I shall probably trouble you soon with another packet. About the "gloomy month of November, when the people of England hang and drown themselves," any thing generally is better than one's own thoughts.

Fond as I may be of my own productions, it is not for their sake that I am so anxious to send you them. I am ambitious, covetously ambitious, of being known to a gentleman whom I am proud to call my countryman; a gentleman who was a Foreign Ambassador as soon as he was a man, and a Leader of Armies as soon as he was a soldier, and that with an *éclat* unknown to the usual minions of a Court—men who, with all the adventitious advantages of princely connections and princely fortune, must yet, like the caterpillar, labour a whole life-time before they reach the wished-for height, there to roost a stupid chrysalis, and doze out the remaining glimmering existence of old age.

* See "Address to the Shade of Thomson," vol. i. p. 190.

† A mason who had been employed in building the poet's house at Ellisland, and got payment for his work.

‡ Colonel Fullerton figures in "The Vision."

If the gentleman who accompanied you when you did me the honour of calling on me is with you, I beg to be respectfully remembered to him. I have the honour to be, Sir, your highly obliged and most devoted humble servant,

R. B.

No CCXCV.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY,

ENCLOSING THE SECOND POETICAL EPISTLE.*

ELLISLAND, *October*, 5, 1791.

I OUGHT to have written you long ago; but a mere letter of thanks must to you be an insipid business. I wish to send you something that will give you at least as much amusement as "The Aberdeen New Prognosticator," or "Six Excellent New Songs." Along with two other pieces, I enclose you a sheetful of groans wrung from me in my elbow chair, with one unlucky leg on a stool before me. I will make no apology for addressing it to you; I have no longer a choice of patrons; the truly noble Glencairn is no more! I intend soon to do myself the honour of writing Mrs. Graham, and sending her some other lesser pieces of late date. My muse will sooner be in mischief than be idle; so I keep her at work.

I ought to have mentioned some Excise ideas that your late goodness has put in my head; but it is so like the sorning impudence of a sturdy beggar, that I cannot do it. It was something in the way of an officiating job. With the most ardent wish that you may be rewarded by *Him* who can do it, for your generous patronage to a man who, though feelingly sensible of it, is quite unable to repay it, I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCXCVI.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

ELLISLAND, *October*, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WAS never more unfit for writing. A poor devil nailed to an elbow-chair, writing in anguish with a bruised leg laid on a stool before him, is in a fine situation truly for saying bright things.

I may perhaps see you about Martinmas. I have sold to my landlord the lease of my farm, and as I roup off everything then, I have a mind to take a week's excursion to see old acquaintance. At all events, you may reckon on [payment of] your account about that time. So much for business. I do not know if I ever informed you that I am now ranked on the list as a supervisor, and I have pretty good reason to believe that I shall soon be called out to employment. The appointment is worth from one to two hundred a year, according to the place of the country in which one is settled. I have not been so lucky in my farming. Mr. Miller's kindness has been just such another as Creech's was—but this for your private ear:—

> "His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,
> Still making work his selfish craft must mend."

By the way I have taken a d——d vengeance of Creech. He wrote me a fine, fair letter, telling me that he was going to print a third edition; and as he had a brother's care of my fame, he wished to add every new thing I have written since, and I should be amply rewarded with —a copy or two to present to my friends! He has sent me a copy of the last edition to correct, &c.; but I have as yet taken no notice of it, and I hear he has published without me. You know, and all my friends know, that I do not value money; but I owed the gentleman a debt, which I am happy to have it in my power to repay.

Farewell, and prosperity attend all your undertakings! I shall try, if my unlucky limb would give me a little ease, to write you a letter a little better worth reading. Put the enclosed to post.

R. B.

No. CCXCVII.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE.

DUMFRIES, 1791.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,

CAN you minister to a mind diseased? can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, head-ache, nausea, and all the rest of the d——d hounds of hell, that beset a poor wretch who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

Misérable perdu that I am, I have tried every thing that used to amuse me, but in vain: here must I sit,

* See vol. i. p. 188.

a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every chick of the clock as it slowly, slowly numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours, who, d——n them, are ranked up before me, every one following his neighbour, and every one with a burden of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me, my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow. When I tell you even . . . has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within, and all around me. I began *Elibanks and Elibraes*, but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue: at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours that lay by me in my book-case, and I felt something, for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence——— Well—I begin to breathe a little since I began to write to you. How are you, and what are you doing? How goes law? Apropos, for connexion's sake, do not address to me supervisor, for that is an honour I cannot pretend to. I am on the list, as we call it, for a supervisor, and will be called out by and by to act as one; but at present I am a simple ganger, though t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of £25 per annum better than the rest. My present income, down money, is £70 per annum.

I have one or two good fellows here whom you would be glad to know.

R. B.

No. CCXCVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

ELLISLAND, 17*th December*, 1791.

MANY thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard, and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in every thing but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song, which, to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers—needs neither preface nor apology.

"SCENE—*A field of battle—time of the day, evening; the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following*

SONG OF DEATH.

Farewell, thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,
Now gay with the bright setting sun;
Farewell, loves and friendships, ye dear, tender ties—
Our race of existence is run," &c. *

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses, was, looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Skye tune, entitled "Oran an Aoig, or the Song of Death," to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces, which, ere yon full-orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at old Mother Earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commende.*

R. B.

No. CCXCIX.

TO MR. WILLIAM SMELLIE, PRINTER. †

DUMFRIES, 22*nd January*, 1792.

I SIT down, my dear Sir, to introduce a young lady to you, and a lady in the first ranks of fashion, too. What a task! to you—who care no more for the herd of animals called young ladies, than you do for the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems industrious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foreground of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs. Riddell,‡ who will take this letter to town with her, and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady, too, is a votary to the Muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge in my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady-poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book; § and, hearing me say that I was acquainted with

* See vol. i. p. 191.
† See LIFE.
‡ See LIFE.
§ "The Philosophy of Natural History."

you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was, to desire her near relation and your intimate friend, Craigdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, * as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing—a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself—where she dislikes, or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning *compliments of the season*, but I will send you my warmest wishes and most ardent prayers, that FORTUNE may never throw your SUBSISTENCE to the mercy of a KNAVE, or set your CHARACTER on the judgment of a FOOL; but that, upright and erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of letters shall say, "Here lies a man who did honour to science," and men of worth shall say, "Here lies a man who did honour to human nature."

R. B.

No. CCC.

TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

DUMFRIES, *5th February*, 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SEND you by the bearer, Mr. Clarke, a particular friend of mine, six pounds and a shilling, which you will dispose of as follows:—five pounds ten shillings per account I owe Mr. R. Burn, architect, for erecting the stone over the grave of poor Fergusson. He was two years in erecting it after I had commissioned him for it, and I have been two years in paying him, after he sent me his account; so he and I are quits. He had the *hardiesse* to ask me interest on the sum; but, considering that the money was due by one poet for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that he ever saw a farthing of it.

With the remainder of the money pay yourself for the "Office of a Messenger" that I bought of you; and send me by Mr. Clarke a note of its price. Send me likewise the fifth volume of the "Observer" by Mr. Clarke; and if any money remain, let it stand to account.

My best compliments to Mrs. Hill.

I sent you a maukin [hare] by last week's fly, which I hope you received. Yours, most sincerely,

R. B.

No. CCCI.

TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL.

20th February, 1792.

O THOU, wisest among the Wise, meridian blaze of Prudence, full-moon of Discretion, and chief of many Counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration, may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favour of that father of Proverbs and master of Maxims, that antipode of Folly and magnet among the Sages—the wise and witty Willie Nicol! Amen! Amen! Yea, so be it!

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, When shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills?† As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of calumny blur the fair page of his reputation, nor the bolt of hatred fly at his dwelling.

Thou mirror of purity, when shall the elfin lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers? As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness and the pleasures of darkness pollute the sacred flame of thy

* Mrs. Riddell was born in the West Indies.

† See LIFE.

sky-descended and heaven-bound desires; never did the vapours of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life, like thine the tenor of my conversation! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid. May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for, O thou lamp of Wisdom and mirror of Morality! thy devoted slave,

R. B.

No. CCCII.

TO MR. STEPHEN CLARKE, EDINBURGH.

16*th July*, 1792.

Mr. Burns begs leave to present his most respectful compliments to Mr. Clarke. Mr. B. some time ago did himself the honour of writing Mr. C. respecting coming out to the country, to give a little musical instruction in a highly respectable family, where Mr. C. may have his own terms, and may be as happy as indolence, the devil, and the gout will permit him. Mr. B. knows well how Mr. C. is engaged with another family; but cannot Mr. C. find two or three weeks to spare to each of them? Mr. B. is deeply impressed with, and awfully conscious of, the high importance of Mr. C.'s time, whether in the winged moments of symphonious exhibition, at the keys of harmony, while listening seraphs cease their own less delightful strains; or in the drowsy hours of slumberous repose, in the arms of his dearly-beloved elbow-chair, where the frowsy but potent power of Indolence circumfuses her vapours round, and sheds her dews on the head of her darling son. But half a line conveying half a meaning from Mr. C. would make Mr. B. the happiest of mortals.

R. B.

No. CCCIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Annan Water-foot, 22*nd August*, 1792.

Do not blame me for it, Madam—my own conscience, hackneyed and weather-beaten as it is, in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, &c., has continued to punish me sufficiently. . . . .

Do you think it possible, my dear and honoured friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favours, to esteem for much worth, and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of now old acquaintance, and I hope and am sure of progressive, increasing friendship—as for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much-loved friend and her wide-scattered connections, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can?

Apropos! though how it is apropos I have not leisure to explain—do you know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours? Almost! said I—I am in love, souse over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the interminglednoms of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Baillie, your neighbour at Mayfield. Mr. B. with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honour of calling on me; on which I took my horse—though, God knows, I could ill spare the time—and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them, and riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with—

"My bonnie Lizzie Baillie,
I 'll rowe thee in my plaidie," &c.

So I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, "unanointed, unannealed," as Hamlet says:—

"O saw ye bonnie Lesley,
As she gaed o'er the Border," &c.*

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse—that two or three people, who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are, almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet but once or twice a

* See vol. ii. p. 26.

year, which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great "evil under the sun," which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition—that "we meet to part no more."

"Tell us, ye dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?"

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. "O that some courteous ghost would blab it out!" But it cannot be: you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary, by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson, and every little creature that shall call me father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labour of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua.

R. B.

No. CCCIV.

TO MR. ALEX. CUNNINGHAM.

DUMFRIES, 10*th September*, 1792.

No! I will not attempt an apology. Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise; making ballads, and then drinking, and singing them; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications;* still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, snatched an hour near "witching time of night," and scrawled a page or two. I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage;† or I might have thanked the Caledonian archers for the honour they have done me‡ (though, to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both long ere now). Well, then, here is to your good health! for you must know, I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me, just by way of spell, to keep away the meikle horned deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

But what shall I write to you? "The voice said, Cry," and I said, "What shall I cry?"§ O, thou spirit! whatever thou art, or wherever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herd callan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the fauld! Be thou a brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose. Be thou a kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry, in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling boat! Or, lastly, be thou a ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent, ghastly dwellings of the dead around thee; or taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, portraying, on his dreaming fancy, pictures dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity! Come, thou spirit, but not in these horrid forms; come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the *tête-a-tête* of a tea-sipping gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clishmaclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth putting pen to paper for.

I feel, I feel the presence of supernatural assistance! circled in the embrace of my elbow-chair, my breast labours, like the bloated Sybil on her three-footed stool, and like her, too, labours with Nonsense. Nonsense, auspicious name! Tutor, friend, and finger-post in the mystic mazes of law; the cadaverous paths of physic; and particularly in the sightless soarings of SCHOOL DIVINITY, who—leaving Common Sense confounded at his strength of pinion, Reason delirious with eyeing his giddy flight, and Truth creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour that ever she offered her scorned alliance to the wizard power of Theologic Vision—raves abroad on all the winds. "On earth discord! a gloomy heaven above,

* The New Edition of his Poems, and Johnson's "Musical Museum."

† Cunningham was married to Miss A. Moir, daughter of the Rev. Mr. Moir of Auchtertool.

‡ The diploma of the Archers, which came into the possession of Major Burns.

§ Isaiah xl. 8.

opening her jealous gates to the nineteen thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below, an inescapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!!!" O doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres misérables*, to whom day brings no pleasure, and night yields no rest, be comforted! "'Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world;" so, alas, the experience of the poor and the needy too often affirms: and 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to *one*, by the dogmas of . . . , that you will be damned eternally in the world to come!*

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the bye, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly: they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful: but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril snuffing putrescence, and a foot spurning filth—in short, with a conceited dignity that your titled . . . , or any other of your Scottish lordlings of seven centuries standing, display when they accidentally mix among the many-aproned sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys! Nay, I have since discovered that a godly woman may be a . . . ! But hold—Here 's t 'ye again—this rum is generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos, how do you like, I mean really like, the married life? Ah, my friend! matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love-sick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of his institutions. I am a husband of older standing than you, and shall give you my ideas of the conjugal state (*en passant;* you know I am no Latinist, is not conjugal derived from *jugum*, a yoke?). Well then, the scale of good wifeship I divide into ten parts. Goodnature, four; Good Sense, two; Wit, one; Personal Charms, viz., a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage (I would add a fine waist too, but that is so soon spoilt, you know), all these, one; as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on, a wife, such as Fortune, Connexions, Education (I mean education extraordinary), Family blood, &c., divide the two remaining degrees among them as you please; only, remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any one of them, in the aforesaid scale, entitled to the dignity of an *integer*.

* A vastly higher proportion than even "Holy Willie" ventured to state in his celebrated Prayer.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—how I lately met with Miss Lesley Baillie, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—how I accompanied her and her father's family fifteen miles on their journey, out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God, in such an unequalled display of them—how, in galloping home at night, I made a ballad on her, in which these two stanzas make a part:—

Thou, bonnie Lesley, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonnie Leslie, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very deil he could na scaith
Whatever wad belang thee!
He 'd look into thy bonnie face
And say, 'I canna wrang thee'.†

Behold all these things are written in the chronicles of my imaginations, and shall be read by thee, my dear friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee, and to thy before-designed *bosom*-companion, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the benignest influences of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life, for ever and ever! Amen!

R. B.

No. CCCV.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, *24th September*, 1792.

I HAVE this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, &c., are out of my head, when I read and think on Mrs. Henri's situation.‡ Good God! a heart-wounded, helpless young woman—in a strange, foreign land, and that land convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none—a mother's feelings too—but it is too much: He who wounded (He only can), may He heal!

I wish the farmer§ great joy of his new acquisition to his family. . . . I cannot say that I give him joy of

† The above is a variation in the third and fourth stanzas of "Bonnie Lesley," in Thomson's Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 26.

‡ See LIFE.

§ A son of Mrs. Dunlop.

his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent—a cursed life! As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness; knowing that none can say unto him, "what dost thou?" fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated, gray-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat.

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs. B. until her nine months' race is run, which may, perhaps, be in three or four weeks. She, too, seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as to let me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to shew a set of boys that will do honour to my cares and name; but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor—a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos: your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart—you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

R. B.

No. CCCVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, *October*, 1792.

I HAD been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day. What shall I say to comfort you, my much-valued, much-afflicted friend? I can but grieve with you; consolation I have none to offer, except that which religion holds out to the children of affliction—*children of affliction!* how just the expression!—and, like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years? What is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire, and leave us in a night of misery—like the gloom which blots out the stars, one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste!

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

R. B.

No. CCCVII.

TO CAPTAIN JOHNSTONE.*

DUMFRIES, *November* 13, 1792.

SIR,

I HAVE, just read your prospectus of the *Edinburgh Gazetteer*. If you go on in your paper with the same spirit, it will, beyond all comparison, be the first composition of the kind in Europe. I beg leave to insert my name as a subscriber, and if you have already published any papers, please send me them from the beginning. Point out your own way of settling payments in this place, or I shall settle with you through the medium of my friend, Peter Hill, bookseller in Edinburgh.

Go on, Sir! Lay bare with undaunted heart and steady hand that horrid mass of corruption called politics and state-craft. Dare to draw in their native colours those—

"Calm-thinking villains whom no faith can fire,"

whatever be the shibboleth of their pretended party.

The address to me at Dumfries will find, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCVIII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, *6th December*, 1792.

I SHALL be in Ayrshire, I think, next week; and, if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much-esteemed friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop House.

Alas, Madam, how seldom do we meet in this world,

* See LIFE. Johnstone came to grief with his Gazetteer.

that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness! I have not passed half the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I and other acquaintances little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind makes us cast an anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with apprehension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals! Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life more than another? A few years ago I could have lain down in the dust, "careless of the voice of the morning;" and now not a few, and these most helpless individuals, would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their "staff and shield." By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition: Mrs. B. having given me a fine girl since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's "Edward and Eleanora:"—

> "The valiant, *in himself*, what can he suffer?
> Or what need he regard his *single* woes?" &c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas! too peculiarly apposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind—

> "Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
> With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
> Glad o'er the summer main? The tempest comes,
> The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
> This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
> Lamenting. Heavens! if privileged from trial
> How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favourite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armour, offensive or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent existence. Of these is one, a very favourite one, from his "Alfred:"—

> "Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
> And offices of life; to life itself,
> With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose."

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed, when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination, so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is religion: speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says—

> "'Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright."

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e'en scribble out t'other sheet. We in this country here have many alarms of the reforming, or rather the republican spirit, of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am a placeman, you know; a very humble one indeed, Heaven knows, but still so much as to gag me. What my private sentiments are you will find out without an interpreter. . . . .

I have taken up the subject in another view, and the other day, for a pretty actress's benefit night, I wrote an Address, which I will give on the other page, called "The Rights of Woman:"

"While Europe's eye is fix'd on mighty things," &c. *

I shall have the honour of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop.

R. B.

No. CCCIX.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, Esq., FINTRY.

December, 1792.

Sir,

I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your Board † to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government.

Sir, you are a husband and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas, Sir! must I think that such soon will be my lot! and from the d——d, dark insinuations of hellish, groundless envy too! I believe, Sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head; and I say, that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British Constitution, on Revolution principles, next after my God,

* See vol. i. p. 205.

† The Scottish Board of Excise: the commissioners then were George Brown, Thomas Wharton, James Stodart, John Grieve, and Robert Graham, Esquires.—See Life.

I am most devoutly attached. You, Sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, Sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent—has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin, for at the worst, "Death's thousand doors stand open;" but, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due. To these, Sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which—with my latest breath I will say it—I have not deserved.

R. B.

No. CCCX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 31*st December*, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,

A HURRY of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgments to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed. Alas, my dearest friend! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures! On my road to Ayrshire I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued, a man whose days promised to be many; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust!

January 2, 1793.

I HAVE just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned: it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over.

Mr. Corbet can be of little service to me at present; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor for several years. I must wait the rotation of the list; and there are twenty names before mine. I might, indeed, get a job of officiating where a settled supervisor was ill or aged; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips as to these unlucky politics; but to you I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in everything else, I shall shew the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate: misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But . . . .*

R. B.

No. CCCXI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

5th January, 1793.†

YOU see my hurried life, Madam; I can only command starts of time; however, I am glad of one thing—since I finished the other sheet the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham—for the Board had made me the subject of their animadversions; and now I have the pleasure of informing you that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose, to ——. But hold! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall a-swearing in this.

Alas! how little do the wantonly or idly officious think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless blabbings. What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candour, benevolence, generosity, kindness—in all the charities and all the virtues—between one class of human beings and another. For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of Dunlop, their generous hearts, their uncontaminated dignified minds, their informed and

* The remainder has been torn away, probably by Mrs. Dunlop, in kindness to the poet.

† This is the real date, it is wrong dated by a year in Currie.

polished understandings — what a contrast when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him, and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife, and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin!

Your cup, my dear Madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I with great formality produced my whigmaleerie cup, and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and by and by never did your great ancestor lay a *Suthron* more completely to rest than for a time did your cup my two friends. Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth!

R. B.

No. CCCXII.

TO MR. ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.

3rd March, 1793.

Since I wrote to you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you farther. When I say that I had not time, that, as usual, means that the three demons, indolence, business, and ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them as not to leave me a five minutes' fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank Heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I daresay he thinks I have used him unkindly; and, I must own, with too much appearance of truth. Apropos, do you know the much-admired old Highland air called "The Sutor's Dochter?" It is a first-rate favourite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you as it was sung, with great applause in some fashionable circles, by Major Robertson of Lude, who was here with his corps.

There is one commission that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much. I have gotten one of your Highland pebbles, which I fancy would make a very decent one, and I want to cut my armorial bearing on it; will you be so obliging as inquire what will be the expense of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all, but I have invented arms for myself; so, you know, I shall be chief of the name, and, by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These, however, I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald, and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly-bush, seeded, proper, in base; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colours, a woodlark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes; round the top of the crest, "Wood-notes wild;" at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, "Better a wee bush than nae bield."* By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters of Arcadia, but a *Stock and Horn*, and a *Club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the "Gentle Shepherd." By the by, do you know Allan? He must be a man of very great genius. Why is he not more known? Has he no patrons? or do "Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy" on him? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of the noblest pastoral in the world; and dear as it was—I mean dear as to my pocket—I would have bought it, but I was told that it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* pastoral *costume*. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches that they narrow and harden the heart so? I think, that were I as rich as the sun, I should be as generous as the day; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than any other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a birdlime quality to the possessor, at which the man in his native poverty would have revolted. What has led me to this is the idea of such merit as Mr. Allan possesses, and such riches as a nabob or government contractor possesses, and why they do not form a mutual league. Let wealth shelter and cherish unprotected merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay it.

R. B.

No. CCCXIII.

TO MISS BENSON.†

Dumfries, 21*st March*, 1793.

Madam,

Among many things for which I envy those hale, long-lived old fellows before the Flood, is this, in parti-

* The seal, with these devices was cut in Edinburgh, and used by Burns till his death.

† Afterwards Mrs. Basil Montagu.

cular—that when they met with anybody after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now, in this short, stormy winter-day of our fleeting existence, when you, now and then, in the chapter of accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turnings, and jostlings of life, pop, at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy believer in the powers of darkness, I take these to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the devil. It is well known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts; and I make no doubt that he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments respecting Miss Benson: how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth, and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear Madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss Hamilton* tells me that she is sending a packet to you, and I beg leave to send you the enclosed sonnet,† though to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCCXIV.

TO PATRICK MILLER, Esq., OF DALSWINTON.

DUMFRIES, *April*, 1793.

SIR,

MY poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honour to accept of a copy? A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted; of my respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country; and of my veneration for you, as a man whose benevolence of heart does honour to human nature.

There was a time, Sir, when I was your dependent;‡ this language *then* would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have used it. Now that that connection is at an end, do me the honour to accept of this honest tribute of respect from, Sir, your much indebted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCXV.

TO JOHN FRANCIS ERSKINE, Esq., OF MAR.§

DUMFRIES, 13*th April*, 1793.

SIR,

DEGENERATE as human nature is said to be—and in many instances worthless and unprincipled it is—still there are bright examples to the contrary; examples that, even in the eyes of superior beings, must shed a lustre on the name of man.

Such an example have I now before me, when you, Sir, came forward to patronise and befriend a distant obscure stranger, merely because poverty had made him helpless, and his British hardihood of mind had provoked the arbitrary wantonness of power. My much-esteemed friend, Mr. Riddell of Glenriddel, has just read me a paragraph of a letter he had from you. Accept, Sir, of the silent throb of gratitude; for words would but mock the emotions of my soul.

You have been misinformed as to my final dismission from the Excise; I am still in the service. Indeed, but for the exertions of a gentleman who must be known to you, Mr. Graham of Fintry—a gentleman who has ever been my warm and generous friend—I had, without so much as a hearing, or the slightest previous intimation, been turned adrift with my helpless family to all the horrors of want. Had I had any other resource, probably I might have saved them the trouble of a dismission; but the little money I gained by my publication is, almost every guinea, embarked to save from ruin an only brother, who, though one of the worthiest, is by no means one of the most fortunate of men.

In my defence to their accusations I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain I abjured the idea—that a CONSTITUTION which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary

* Charlotte Hamilton. † What the Sonnet was is not known.

‡ Alluding to the time when he had been tenant of Ellisland under Miller.

§ See LIFE.

theory—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally or as an author, in the present business of REFORM: but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended. Some such sentiments as these I stated in a letter to my generous patron, Mr. Graham, which he laid before the Board at large, where, it seems, my last remark gave great offence; and one of our supervisors-general, a Mr. Corbet, was instructed to inquire on the spot, and to document me—that my business was to act, *not to think;* and that, whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be *silent* and *obedient.*

Mr. Corbet was likewise my steady friend; so between Mr. Graham and him I have been partly forgiven: only I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted.

Now, Sir, to the business in which I would more immediately interest you. The partiality of my COUNTRYMEN has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the POET I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I trust will be found in the MAN. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and family, have pointed out as the eligible, and, situated as I was, the only eligible line of life for me, my present occupation. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern; and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of those degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exulting in his hireling paragraphs—"BURNS, notwithstanding the *fanfaronade* of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held forth to public view and to public estimation as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, he dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the vilest of mankind."*

In your illustrious hands, Sir, permit me to lodge my disavowal and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods. BURNS was a poor man from birth, and an exciseman by necessity; but—I *will* say it—the sterling of his honest worth no poverty could debase, and his independent British mind oppression might bend, but could not subdue. Have not I, to me, a more precious stake in my country's welfare than the richest dukedom in it? I have a large family of children, and the prospect of many more. I have three sons, who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES. Can I look tamely on, and see any machination to wrest from them the birthright of my boys—the little independent BRITONS, in whose veins runs my own blood? No! I will not, should my heart'-blood stream around my attempt to defend it!

Does any man tell me, that my full efforts can be of no service, and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concern of a nation?

I can tell him that it is on such individuals as I that a nation has to rest, both for the hand of support and the eye of intelligence. The uninformed MOB may swell a nation's bulk; and the titled, tinsel, courtly throng may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court—these are a nation's strength!

I know not how to apologise for the impertinent length of this epistle; but one small request I must ask of you farther—When you have honoured this letter with a perusal, please to commit it to the flames. BURNS, in whose behalf you have so generously interested yourself, I have here, in his native colours, drawn *as he is;* but should any of the people in whose hands is the very bread he eats, get the least knowledge of the picture, it would ruin the poor BARD for ever.

My poems having just come out in another edition, I beg leave to present you with a copy, as a small mark of that high esteem and ardent gratitude with which I have the honour to be, Sir, your deeply-indebted and ever devoted humble servant,

R. B.

* The feeling here displayed in this noble letter is morbid.

No. CCCXVI.

TO MR. ROBERT AINSLIE, EDINBURGH.

April 26, 1793.

I AM d——nably out of humour, my dear Ainslie, and that is the reason why I take up the pen to you: 'tis the nearest way (*probatum est*) to recover my spirits again.

I received your last, and was much entertained with it; but I will not at this time, nor at any other time, answer it. Answer a letter!—I never could answer a letter in

my life. I have written many a letter in return for letters I have received; but then—they were original matter—spurt-away! zig here, zag there; as if the devil, that my grannie (an old woman *indeed!*) often told me, rode on Will-o'-wisp, or, in her more classic phrase, SPUNKIE, were looking over my elbow. A happy thought that idea has engendered in my head! SPUNKIE—thou shalt henceforth be my symbol, signature, and tutelary genius! Like thee, hap-step-and-loup, here-awa-there-awa, higglety-pigglety, pell-mell, hither-and-yont, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the moon—has been, is, and shall be, my progress through the mosses and moors of this vile, bleak, barren wilderness of a life of ours.

Come, then, my guardian spirit! like thee, may I skip away, amusing myself by and at my own light; and if any opaque-souled lubber of mankind complain that my elfine, lambent, glimmerous wanderings have misled his stupid steps over precipices or into bogs, let the thick-headed blunderbuss recollect that he is not SPUNKIE; that—

> "SPUNKIE'S wanderings could not copied be;
> Amid these perils none durst walk but he."

I feel vastly better. I give you joy. . . . I have no doubt but scholarcraft may be caught, as a Scotchman catches the itch, by friction. How else can you account for it, that born blockheads, by mere dint of handling books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of and surprised at their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree, that in a knot of country folks who had a library amongst them, and who, to the honour of their good sense, made me factotum in the business; one of our members, a little, wise-looking, squat, upright, jabbering body of a tailor, I advised him instead of turning over the leaves, *to bind the book on his back.* Johnnie took the hint, and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday, and Pricklouse having a good Scots mile to walk in coming, and of course another in returning, Bodkin was sure to lay his hand on some heavy quarto or ponderous folio, with, and under which, wrapt up in his gray plaid, he grew wise as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance, which we had in a present from a neighbouring priest, by mere dint of applying it, as doctors do a blistering plaster, between his shoulders, Stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology as the said priest had done by forty years' perusal of the pages.

Tell me, and tell me truly, what you think of this theory. Yours,

SPUNKIE.

No. CCCXVII.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.*

November, 1793.

DEAR MADAM,

I MEANT to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday, when we may arrange the business of the visit. . . .

Among the profusion of idle compliments which insidious craft or unmeaning folly incessantly offer at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity's sake, to pay you the honest tribute of a warm heart and an independent mind; and to assure you that I am, thou most amiable and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem and fervent regard, thine, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCCXVIII.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ.

DUMFRIES, *December*, 1793.

SIR,

IT is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man. Here is Ker's account, and here are six guineas; and now, I don't owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these d——d dirty, dog-eared little pages,† I had done myself the honour to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under, the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money, too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have for some years been making—I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not conveniently spare them above five or six days, and five

* See LIFE. † Scottish Bank Notes.

or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr. Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains. *

R. B.

No. CCCXIX.

TO JOHN M'MURDO, Esq.

DUMFRIES, 1793.

WILL Mr. M'Murdo do me the favour to accept of these volumes?† a trifling but sincere mark of the very high respect I bear for his worth as a man, his manners as a gentleman, and his kindness as a friend. However inferior now, or afterwards, I may rank as a poet, one honest virtue, to which few poets can pretend, I trust I shall ever claim as mine; to no man, whatever his station in life, or his power to serve me, have I ever paid a compliment at the expense of TRUTH.

R. B.

No. CCCXX.

TO CAPTAIN ——— .‡

DUMFRIES, *5th December*, 1793.

SIR,

HEATED as I was with wine yesternight, I was perhaps rather seemingly impertinent in my anxious wish to be honoured with your acquaintance. You will forgive it—it was the impulse of heartfelt respect. "He is the father of the Scottish county reform, and is a man who does honour to the business, at the same time that the business does honour to him," said my worthy friend Glenriddel to somebody by me, who was talking of your coming to this country with your corps. "Then," I said, "I have a woman's longing to take him by the hand, and say to him: 'Sir, I honour you as a man to whom the interests of humanity are dear, and as a patriot to whom the rights of your country are sacred.'"

In times like these, Sir, when our commoners are barely able, by the glimmering of their own twilight understandings, to scrawl a frank, and when lords are what gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom shall a sinking country call for help? To the independent country gentleman. To him who has too deep a stake in his country not to be in earnest for her welfare; and who, in the honest pride of man, can view with equal contempt the insolence of office and the allurements of corruption.

I mentioned to you a Scots ode or song I had lately composed, and which, I think, has some merit. Allow me to enclose it. When I fall in with you at the theatre, I shall be glad to have your opinion of it. Accept of it, Sir, as a very humble, but most sincere tribute of respect from a man who, dear as he prizes poetic fame, yet holds dearer an independent mind. I have the honour to be,

R. B.

No. CCCXXI.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

I AM thinking to send my "Address" to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction, so pray look over it.

As to the Tuesday's play, let me beg of you, my dear Madam, to give us "The Wonder, a Woman keeps a Secret!" to which please add, "The Spoilt Child"—you will highly oblige me by so doing.

Ah, what an enviable creature you are! There now, this cursed, gloomy, blue-devil day, you are going to a party of choice spirits—

> "To play the shapes
> Of frolic fancy, and incessant form
> Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
> Of fleet ideas, never join'd before,
> Where lively *wit* excites to gay surprise;
> Or folly-painting *humour*, grave himself,
> Calls laughter forth, deep shaking every nerve."

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend,

R. B.

* See LIFE.

† The edition of the Poet's works referred to before.

‡ This letter, supposed to have been addressed to Captain Robertson of Lude, first appeared in Mr. Robert Chambers' collection of Scottish Songs.

No. CCCXXII.

TO A LADY,*

IN FAVOUR OF A PLAYER'S BENEFIT.

DUMFRIES, 1794.

MADAM,

YOU were so very good as to promise me to honour my friend with your presence on his benefit-night. That night is fixed for Friday first: the play a most interesting one—"The Way to Keep Him." I have the pleasure to know Mr. G. well. His merit as an actor is generally acknowledged. He has genius and worth which would do honour to patronage: he is a poor and modest man; claims which from their very *silence* have the more forcible power on the generous heart. Alas, for pity! that from the indolence of those who have the good things of this life in their gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon, the rightful due of retiring, humble want! Of all the qualities we assign to the Author and Director of Nature, by far the most enviable is—to be able "to wipe away all tears from all eyes." O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent *mausoleums*, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor honest heart happy.

But I crave your pardon, Madam; I came to beg, not to preach.

R. B.

No. CCCXXIII.

TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

DUMFRIES, 12*th January*, 1794.

MY LORD,

WILL your Lordship allow me to present you with the enclosed little composition of mine,† as a small tribute of gratitude for the acquaintance with which you have been pleased to honour me? Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with anything in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel, but able usurper, leading on the finest army in Europe to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly-daring and greatly-injured people; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her.

Liberty! thou art a prize truly and indeed invaluable, for never canst thou be too dearly bought!

If my little ode has the honour of your Lordship's approbation, it will gratify my highest ambition. I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

* Mrs. Riddell probably.

† Bruce's Address to his Army at Bannockburn.

No. CCCXXIV.

TO CAPTAIN MILLER, DALSWINTON.

DEAR SIR,

THE following ode‡ is on a subject which I know you by no means regard with indifference. O Liberty,

> "Thou mak'st the gloomy face of nature gay,
> Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day."

It does me so much good to meet with a man whose honest bosom glows with the generous enthusiasm, the heroic daring of liberty, that I could not forbear sending you a composition of my own on the subject, which I really think is in my best manner. I have the honour to be, dear Sir, &c.,

R. B.

‡ Bruce's Address.

No. CCCXXV.

TO MR. STEPHEN CLARKE, JUN., DUMFRIES.

SUNDAY MORNING.

DEAR SIR,

I WAS, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Capt. —— made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and family of children in a drunken squabble. Further, you know that the report of certain

political opinions being mine, has already once before brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread lest last night's business may be misrepresented in the same way. You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for Mrs. Burns' welfare with the task of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, shew him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? "May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause"—a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to. I request and beg that this morning you will wait on the parties present at the foolish dispute. I shall only add, that I am truly sorry that a man who stood so high in my estimation as Mr. ——— should use me in the manner in which I conceive he has done.

R. B.

No. CCCXXVI.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

I HAVE this moment got the song from Syme, and I am sorry to see that he has spoilt it a good deal. It shall be a lesson to me how I lend him any thing again.

I have sent you "Werter," truly happy to have any, the smallest opportunity of obliging you.

'Tis true, Madam, I saw you once since I was at Woodley; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart. Your reception of me was such, that a wretch meeting the eye of his judge, about to pronounce sentence of death on him, could only have envied my feelings and situation. But I hate the theme, and never more shall write or speak on it.

One thing I shall proudly say, that I can pay Mrs. R. a higher tribute of esteem, and appreciate her amiable worth more truly, than any man whom I have seen approach her; *nor will I yield the pas to any man living*, subscribing myself, with the sincerest truth, her devoted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCXXVII.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

I WILL wait on you, my ever valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call *the gin-horse class:* what enviable dogs they are. Round, and round, and round they go—Mundell's ox, that drives his cotton mill, is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a d——d melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he foretold—"And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!" If my resentment is awaked, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak; and if—

. . . . . .

Pray that Wisdom and Bliss be more frequent visitors of

R. B.

No. CCCXXVIII.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

I HAVE often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spice of caprice in your composition, and you have as often disavowed it; even perhaps while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could any thing estrange me from a friend such as you? No! To-morrow I shall have the honour of waiting on you.

Farewell, thou first of friends, and most accomplished of women! even with all thy little caprices!

R. B.

No. CCCXXIX.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

MADAM,

I DARESAY this is the first epistle you ever received from this nether world. I write you from the regions of hell, amid the horrors of the d——d. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know, as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable

mansion; but, on my arrival here, I was fairly tried, and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days, and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclined on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormentor, wrinkled, and old, and cruel—his name, I think, is *Recollection*—with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, Madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason, I trouble you with this letter. To the men of the company I will make no apology. Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, Madam, I have much to apologise. Your good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had made on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss I——, too, a woman of fine sense, gentle and unassuming manners—do make, on my part, a miserable d—— d wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs. G——, a charming woman, did me the honour to be prejudiced in my favour; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness. To all the other ladies, please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O all ye powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible with me—but—

. . . . . .

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of, Madam, your humble slave,

R. B.

No. CCCXXX.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

DUMFRIES, 1794.

MADAM,

I RETURN your common-place book. I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms, but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that "offences come only from the heart," before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you, as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect and contemptuous scorn, is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good-luck, that while *de haut-en-bas* rigour may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a tendency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which, though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities; the most sincere esteem, and ardent regard for your gentle heart and amiable manners; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss—I have the honour to be, Madam, your most devoted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCXXXI.

TO JOHN SYME, Esq.

YOU know that, among other high dignities, you have the honour to be my supreme court of critical judicature, from which there is no appeal. I enclose you a song which I composed since I saw you, and I am going to give you the history of it. Do you know that among much that I admire in the characters and manners of those great folks whom I have now the honour to call my acquaintances, the Oswald family, there is nothing charms me more than Mr. Oswald's unconcealable attachment to that incomparable woman? Did you ever, my dear Syme, meet with a man who owed more to the Divine Giver of all good things than Mr. O.? A fine fortune; a pleasing exterior; self-evident amiable dispositions, and an ingenuous, upright mind, and that informed, too, much beyond the usual run of young fellows of his rank and fortune: and to all this, such a woman! but of her I shall say nothing at all, in despair of saying anything adequate. In my song I have endeavoured to do justice to what would be his feelings, on seeing, in the scene I have drawn, the habitation of his Lucy. As I am a good deal pleased with my performance, I in my first

fervour thought of sending it to Mrs. Oswald; but on second thoughts, perhaps what I offer as the honest incense of genuine respect, might, from the well-known character of poverty and poetry, be construed into some modification or other of that servility which my soul abhors. Do let me know some convenient moment, ere the worthy family leave the town, that I, *with propriety*, may wait on them. In the circle of the fashionable herd—those who come either to shew their own consequence, or to borrow consequence from the visit—in such a mob I will not appear; mine is a different errand.—Yours,

R. B.

No. CCCXXXII.

TO MISS RIDDELL.*

DUMFRIES, 1794.

MADAM,

NOTHING short of a kind of absolute necessity could have made me trouble you with this letter. Except my ardent and just esteem for your sense, taste, and worth, every sentiment arising in my breast, as I put pen to paper to you, is painful. The scenes I have passed with the friend of my soul, and his amiable connections! the wrench at my heart to think that he is gone, for ever gone from me, never more to meet in the wanderings of a weary world! and the cutting reflection of all, that I had most unfortunately, though most undeservedly, lost the confidence of that soul of worth, ere it took its flight!—these, Madam, are sensations of no ordinary anguish. However you also may be offended with some *imputed* improprieties of mine, sensibility you know I possess, and sincerity none will deny me.

To oppose those prejudices which have been raised against me, is not the business of this letter. Indeed, it is a warfare I know not how to wage. The powers of positive vice I can in some degree calculate, and against direct malevolence I can be on my guard; but who can estimate the fatuity of giddy caprice, or ward off the unthinking mischief of precipitate folly?

I have a favour to request of you, Madam; and of your sister, Mrs. [Riddell], through your means. You know that, at the wish of my late friend, I made a collection of all my trifles in verse which I had ever written. They are many of them local, some of them puerile and silly, and all of them unfit for the public eye. As I have some little fame at stake—a fame that I trust may live when the hate of those "who watch for my halting," and the contumelious sneer of those whom accident has made my superiors, will, with themselves, be gone to the regions of oblivion—I am uneasy now for the fate of those manuscripts. Will Mrs. [Riddell] have the goodness to destroy them, or return them to me? As a pledge of friendship they were bestowed; and that circumstance, indeed, was all their merit. Most unhappily for me, that merit they no longer possess; and I hope that Mrs. [Riddell]'s goodness, which I well know and ever will revere, will not refuse this favour to a man whom she once held in some degree of estimation.

With the sincerest esteem, I have the honour to be, Madam, &c.,

R. B.

* A sister of Mrs. Riddell of Friars' Carse.—See LIFE.

No. CCCXXXIII.

TO MR. ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM.

25th February, 1794.

CANST thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tost on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame, tremblingly alive as the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries with thy inquiries after me?

For these two months, I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep, incurable taint of hypochondria, which poisons my existence. Of late, a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these cursed times—losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill bear—have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

Still, there are two great pillars that bear us up amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The ONE is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble, stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The OTHER is made up of those feelings and sentiments which, however the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*, if I may be allowed the expression, which connect us with, and link us to those awful obscure realities—an all-powerful and equally beneficent God, and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field; the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW to lead the undiscerning MANY; or, at most, as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know anything of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others, were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart, and an imagination delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all nature, and through nature up to nature's God. His soul, by swift, delighting degrees, is rapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thomson—

> "These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
> Are but the varied God. The rolling year
> Is full of thee; ——"

and so on, in all the spirit and ardour of that charming hymn. These are no ideal pleasures—they are real delights; and I ask, what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say equal, to them? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious virtue stamps them for her own, and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a witnessing, judging, and approving God.

R. B.

No. CCCXXXIV.

TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN.

May, 1794.

MY LORD,

WHEN you cast your eye on the name at the bottom of this letter, and on the title-page of the book* I do myself the honour to send your Lordship, a more pleasurable feeling than my vanity tells me, that it must be a name not entirely unknown to you. The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother found me in the lowest obscurity: he introduced my rustic Muse to the partiality of my country; and to him I owe all. My sense of his goodness, and the anguish of my soul at losing my truly noble protector and friend, I have endeavoured to express in a poem to his memory, which I have now published. This edition is just from the press; and in my gratitude to the dead, and my respect for the living (fame belies you, my Lord, if you possess not the same dignity of man, which was your noble brother's characteristic feature), I had destined a copy for the Earl of Glencairn. I learnt just now that you are in town: allow me to present it you.

I know, my Lord, such is the vile, venal contagion which pervades the world of letters, that professions of respect from an author, particularly from a poet to a lord, are more than suspicious. I claim my by-past conduct, and my feelings at this moment, as exceptions to the too just conclusion. Exalted as are the honours of your Lordship's name, and unnoted as is the obscurity of mine; with the uprightness of an honest man, I come before your Lordship, with an offering—however humble, 'tis all I have to give—of my grateful respect; and to beg of you, my Lord—'tis all I have to ask of you—that you will do me the honour to accept of it. I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCCXXXV.

TO DAVID MACCULLOCH, Esq.†

DUMFRIES, 21*st June*, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

MY long-projected journey through your country is at last fixed; and on Wednesday next, if you have nothing of more importance to do, take a

* The new edition of the Poet's works.

† This gentleman had a sister married to Thomas Scott, brother of Sir Walter Scott.

saunter down to Gatehouse about two or three o'clock; I shall be happy to take a draught of M'Kune's best with you. Collector Syme will be at Glen's about that time, and will meet us about dish-of-tea hour. Syme goes also to Kerroughtree, and let me remind you of your kind promise to accompany me there; I will need all the friends I can muster, for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your honourables and right honourables. Yours sincerely,

R. B.

No. CCCXXXVI.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

CASTLE DOUGLAS, *25th June*, 1794.

HERE, in a solitary inn, in a solitary village, am I set by myself, to amuse my brooding fancy as I may. Solitary confinement, you know, is Howard's favourite idea of reclaiming sinners; so let me consider by what fatality it happens that I have so long been so exceeding sinful as to neglect the correspondence of the most valued friend I have on earth. To tell you that I have been in poor health will not be excuse enough, though it is true. I am afraid that I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. My medical friends threaten me with a flying gout; but I trust they are mistaken.

I am just going to trouble your critical patience with the first sketch of a stanza I have been framing as I passed along the road. The subject is *Liberty:* you know, my honoured friend, how dear the theme is to me. I design it as an irregular ode for General Washington's birthday. After having mentioned the degeneracy of other kingdoms, I come to Scotland thus:—

"Thee, Caledonia, thy wild heaths among,
Thee, famed for martial deed and sacred song," &c. *

You will probably have another scrawl from me in a stage or two.

R. B.

No. CCCXXXVII.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON.

DUMFRIES, 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,

I SEND you by my friend, Mr. Wallace, forty one songs for your fifth volume. Mr. Clarke has also a good many, if he have not, with his usual indolence, *cast them at the cocks.* I have still a good parcel amongst my hands in scraps and fragments; so that I hope we will make shift with our last volume.

You should have heard from me long ago; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed times, I have all this winter been plagued with low spirits and blue devils; so that *I have almost hung my harp on the willow trees.*

In the meantime, at your leisure, give a copy of the *Museum*, to my worthy friend, Mr. Peter Hill, bookseller, to bind for me, interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the Laird of Glenriddell's, that I may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after-period, by way of making the *Museum* a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever.

I have got a Highland dirk, for which I have great veneration, as it once was the dirk of Lord Balmerino. It fell into bad hands, who stripped it of its silver-mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care, to get it mounted anew. Our friend Clarke owes me an account, somewhere about one pound, which would go a good way in paying the expense. I remember you once settled an account in this way before, and as you still have money-matters to settle with him, you might accommodate us both. . . . . My best compliments to your worthy old father and your better-half. Yours,

R. B.

No. CCCXXXVIII.

TO MR. PETER HILL, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, *October*, 1794.

MY DEAR HILL,

BY a carrier of yesterday, Henry Osborn by name, I sent you a kippered salmon, which I trust you will duly receive, and which I also trust will give you many a toothful of satisfaction. If you have the confidence to say, that there is anything of the kind in all your great city superior to this in true kipper relish and flavour I will be revenged by—not sending you another next season. In return, the first party of friends that dine with you—provided that your fellow-travellers and my trusty and well-beloved veterans in intimacy, Messrs. Ramsay and Cameron, be of the party—about that time in the

* See vol. i. p. 219.

afternoon when a relish or devil becomes grateful, give them two or three slices of the kipper, and drink a bumper to your friends in Dumfries. Moreover, by last Saturday's fly I sent you a hare, which I hope came, and carriage-free, safe to your hospitable mansion and social table. So much for business.

How do you like the following pastoral, which I wrote the other day, for a tune that I daresay you well know?

"Ca' the yowes to the knowes,
Ca' them where the heather grows," &c. *

And how do you like the following?

"Kemble, thou cur'st my unbelief
Of Moses and his rod," &c. †

Or this?

"Sic a reptile was Wat, sic a miscreant slave,
That the worms ev'n d——d him when laid in his grave," &c. ‡

My best good-wishes to Mrs. Hill, and believe me to be, ever yours,

R. B.

No. CCCXXXIX.

TO PETER MILLER, Jun., Esq.

Dumfries, *November*, 1794.

Dear Sir,

Your offer is indeed truly generous, and most sincerely do I thank you for it; but in my present situation, I find that I dare not accept it. You well know my political sentiments; and were I an insular individual, unconnected with a wife and a family of children, with the most fervid enthusiasm I would have volunteered my services: I then could and would have despised all consequences that might have ensued.

My prospect in the Excise is something; at least, it is, encumbered as I am with the welfare, the very existence, of near half-a-score of helpless individuals, what I dare not sport with.

In the meantime, they are most welcome to my Ode; only, let them insert it as a thing they have met with by accident, and unknown to me. Nay, if Mr. Perry, whose honour, after your character of him, I cannot doubt, if he will give me an address and channel by which anything will come safe from those spies with which he may be certain that his correspondence is beset, I will now and then send him any bagatelle that I may write. In the present hurry of Europe, nothing but news and politics will be regarded; but against the days of peace, which Heaven send soon, my little assistance may perhaps fill up an idle column of a newspaper. I have long had it in my head to try my hand in the way of little prose essays, which I propose sending into the world through the medium of some newspaper; and should these be worth his while, to these Mr. Perry shall be welcome: and all my reward shall be—his treating me with his paper, which, by the bye, to anybody who has the least relish for wit, is a high treat indeed. With the most grateful esteem, I am ever, dear Sir,

R. B.

No. CCCXL.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Dumfries, 20*th December*, 1794.

I have been prodigiously disappointed in this London journey of yours. In the first place, when your last to me reached Dumfries, I was in the country, and did not return until too late to answer your letter; in the next place, I thought you would certainly take this route; and now I know not what has become of you, or whether this may reach you at all. God grant that it may find you and yours in prospering health and good spirits! Do let me hear from you the soonest possible.

As I hope to get a frank from my friend Captain Miller, I shall, every leisure hour, take up the pen, and gossip away whatever comes first—prose or poetry, sermon or song. In this last article I have abounded of late. I have often mentioned to you a superb publication of Scottish songs, which is making its appearance in your great metropolis, and where I have the honour to preside over the Scottish verse, as no less a personage than Peter Pindar does over the English.

December 29.

Since I began this letter, I have been appointed to act in the capacity of supervisor here; and I assure you, what with the load of business, and what with that business being new to me, I could scarcely have commanded ten minutes to have spoken to you, had you been in town, much less to have written you an epistle. This appointment is only temporary, and during the illness of the present incumbent; but I look forward to an early period when I shall be appointed in full form—a consummation

* See vol. ii. p. 11. † See vol. i. p. 241. ‡ See vol. i. p. 221.

devoutly to be wished! My political sins seem to be forgiven me.

This is the season (New-Year's Day is now my date) of wishing; and mine are most fervently offered up for you! May life to you be a positive blessing while it lasts, for your own sake; that it may yet be greatly prolonged is my wish for my own sake, and for the sake of the rest of your friends! What a transient business is life! Very lately, I was a boy; but t'other day, I was a young man; and I already begin to feel the rigid fibre and stiffening joints of old age coming fast o'er my frame. With all my follies of youth, and, I fear, a few vices of manhood, still I congratulate myself on having had, in early days, religion strongly impressed on my mind. I have nothing to say to any one as to which sect he belongs to or what creed he believes; but I look on the man who is firmly persuaded of infinite wisdom and goodness superintending and directing every circumstance that can happen in his lot—I felicitate such a man as having a solid foundation for his mental enjoyment—a firm prop and sure stay in the hour of difficulty, trouble, and distress—and a never-failing anchor of hope when he looks beyond the grave.

12*th January*, 1795.

You will have seen our worthy and ingenious friend, the doctor [Dr. Moore], long ere this. I hope he is well, and beg to be remembered to him. I have just been reading over again, I daresay for the hundred-and-fiftieth time, his "View of Society and Manners;" and still I read it with delight. His humour is perfectly original—it is neither the humour of Addison, nor Swift, nor Sterne, nor of anybody but Dr. Moore. By the bye, you have deprived me of "Zeluco;" remember that, when you are disposed to rake up the sins of my neglect from among the ashes of my laziness.

He has paid me a pretty compliment, by quoting me in his last publication.*

R. B.

No. CCCXLI.

TO MISS FONTENELLE.†

DUMFRIES, 1795.

MADAM,

IN such a bad world as ours, those who add to the scanty sum of our pleasures are positively our benefactors. To you, Madam, on our humble Dumfries boards, I have been more indebted for entertainment than ever I was in prouder theatres. Your charms as a woman would insure applause to the most indifferent actress, and your theatrical talents would insure admiration to the plainest figure. This, Madam, is not the unmeaning or insidious compliment of the frivolous or interested; I pay it from the same honest impulse that the sublime of nature excites my admiration, or her beauties give me delight.

Will the foregoing lines be of any service to you in your approaching benefit night?‡ If they will, I shall be prouder of my muse than ever. They are nearly extempore: I know they have no great merit; but though they should add but little to the entertainment of the evening, they give me the happiness of an opportunity to declare how much I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCCXLII.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MORNING CHRONICLE.§

DUMFRIES, 1795.

SIR,

YOU will see by your subscribers' list that I have been about nine months of that number.

I am sorry to inform you, that in that time seven or eight of your papers either have never been sent me, or else have never reached me. To be deprived of any one number of the first newspaper in Great Britain for information, ability, and independence, is what I can ill brook to bear; but to be deprived of that most admirable oration of the Marquis of Lansdowne, when he made the great, though ineffectual attempt (in the language of the poet, I

* Edward, a novel, by Dr. Moore.

† An actress in the Dumfries Theatre of considerable personal attraction. Nothing else is known of her.

‡ See the "Address spoken by Miss Fontenelle," vol. i. p. 229.

§ "This letter owes its origin to the following circumstance. A neighbour of the Poet's at Dumfries, called on him, and complained that he had been greatly disappointed in the irregular delivery of the paper of 'The Morning Chronicle.' Burns asked, 'Why do you not write to the editors of the paper?' 'Good God, Sir, can *I* presume to write to the learned editors of a newspaper?' 'Well, if *you* are afraid of writing to the editors of a newspaper, *I* am not; and if you think proper, I'll draw up a sketch of a letter which you may copy.' Burns tore a leaf from his excise book, and instantly produced the sketch which I have transcribed, and which is here printed. The poor man thanked him, and took the letter home. However, that caution which the watchfulness of his enemies had taught him to exercise, prompted him to the prudence of begging a friend to wait on the person for whom it was written, and request the favour to have it returned. This request was complied with, and the paper never appeared in print."—CROMEK.

fear too true), "to save a SINKING STATE"—this was a loss that I neither can nor will forgive you. That paper, Sir, never reached me; but I demand it of you. I am a BRITON, and must be interested in the cause of LIBERTY: I am a MAN, and the RIGHTS OF HUMAN NATURE cannot be indifferent to me. However, do not let me mislead you: I am not a man in that situation of life, which, as your subscriber, can be of any consequence to you, in the eyes of those to whom SITUATION OF LIFE ALONE is the criterion of MAN. I am but a plain tradesman, in this obscure, distant country town: but that humble domicile in which I shelter my wife and children, is the CASTELLUM of a BRITON; and that scanty, hard-earned income which supports them, is as truly my property, as the most magnificent fortune of the most PUISSANT MEMBER of your HOUSE OF NOBLES.

These, Sir, are my sentiments and to them I subscribe my name: and were I a man of ability and consequence enough to address the PUBLIC, with that name should they appear. I am, &c.,

R. B.

No. CCCXLIII.

TO MR. HERON, OF HERON.*

DUMFRIES, 1794, or 1795.

SIR,

I ENCLOSE you some copies of a couple of political ballads; one of which, I believe, you have never seen.† Would to Heaven I could make you master of as many votes in the Stewartry—but—

"Who does the utmost that he can,
Does well, acts nobly, angels could no more."

In order to bring my humble efforts to bear with more effect on the foe, I have privately printed a good many copies of both ballads, and have sent them among friends all about the country.

To pillory on Parnassus the rank reprobation of character, the utter dereliction of all principle, in a profligate junto which has not only outraged virtue, but violated common decency; which, spurning even hypocrisy as paltry iniquity below their daring—to unmask their flagitiousness to the broadest day, to deliver such over to their merited fate, is surely not merely innocent, but laudable; is not only propriety, but virtue. You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear by the lyre of Thalia to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter, and fair, candid ridicule!

I am extremely obliged to you for your kind mention of my interests in a letter which Mr. Syme showed me. At present my situation in life must be in a great measure stationary, at least for two or three years. The statement is this—I am on the supervisors' list, and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of that list, and be appointed *of course*. *Then*, a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a place of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about a hundred and twenty to two hundred a year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor, in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list; and this is always a business purely of political patronage. A collectorship varies much, from better than two hundred a year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list; and have, besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competency, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, or would not be indebted to a political friend; at the same time, Sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you thus, to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence. If, in my progress of life, an opening should occur where the good offices of a gentleman of your public character and political consequence might bring me forward, I shall petition your goodness with the same frankness as I now do myself the honour to subscribe myself,

R. B.

No. CCCXLIV.

TO CAPTAIN HAMILTON.

Saturday Morning [*January* 31, 1795.]

SIR,

I WAS from home, and had not the opportunity of seeing your more than polite, your most friendly card. It is not possible, most worthy Sir, that you could do anything to offend anybody. My backwardness proceeds alone from the abashing consciousness of my obscure station in the ranks of life. Many an evening have I sighed to call in and spend it at your social fireside; but a shyness of appearing obstrusive amid the fashionable

* Also styled "of Kerroughtree," but properly as Heron, of Heron.
† See "The Heron Ballads,' vol. i. pp. 221–223.

visitants occasionally there, kept me at a distance. It shall do so no more. On Monday, I must be in the country, and most part of the week; but the first leisure evening I shall avail myself of your hospitable goodness. With the most ardent sentiments of gratitude and respect, I have the honour to be, Sir, your highly-obliged humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCXLV.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

DUMFRIES, 1795.

MR. BURNS'S compliments to Mrs. Riddell—is much obliged to her for her polite attention in sending him the book. Owing to Mr. B. at present acting as supervisor of Excise, a department that occupies his every hour of the day, he has not that time to spare which is necessary for any belles-lettres pursuit; but as he will in a week or two again return to his wonted leisure, he will then pay that attention to Mrs. R.'s beautiful song, "To thee, loved Nith," which it so well deserves.* When "Anacharsis's Travels" come to hand, which Mrs. Riddell mentioned as her gift to the public library, Mr. B. will feel honoured by the indulgence of a perusal of them before presentation: it is a book he has never yet seen, and the regulations of the library allow too little leisure for deliberate reading.

FRIDAY MORNING.

P. S.—Mr. Burns will be much obliged to Mrs. Riddell if she will favour him with a perusal of any of her poetical pieces which he may not have seen.

R. B.

* The entire song is as follows:—

"To thee, loved Nith, thy gladsome plains,
Where late with careless thought I ranged,
Though prest with care, and sunk in wo,
To thee I bring a heart unchanged.
I love thee, Nith, thy banks and braes,
Though Memory there my bosom tear,
For there he roved, that broke my heart.
Yet to that heart, ah, still how dear!

"And now your banks and bonnie braes
But waken sad remembrance' smart:
The very shades I held most dear
Now strike fresh anguish to my heart:
Deserted bower! where are they now?
Ah! where the garlands that I wove
With faithful care—each morn to deck
The altars of ungrateful love?

"The flowers of spring, how gay they bloomed
When last with him I wandered here!
The flowers of spring are past away
For wintry horrors dark and drear.
Yon osier'd stream by whose lone banks
My songs have lulled him oft to rest,
Is now in icy fetters locked—
Cold as my false love's frozen breast."

CCCXLVI.

TO [RICHARD A. OSWALD, ESQ.]

DUMFRIES, 23*rd April*, 1795.

SIR,

YOU see the danger of patronising the rhyming tribe: you flatter the poet's vanity—a most potent ingredient in the composition of a son of rhyme—by a little notice; and he, in return, persecutes your good-nature with his acquaintance. In these days of volunteering, I have come forward with my services, as Poet-Laureate to a highly respectable political party, of which you are a distinguished member. The enclosed are, I hope, only a beginning to the songs of triumph which you will earn in that contest. I have the honour to be, Sir, your obliged and devoted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCXLVII.

TO MR. JOHN EDGAR, EXCISE-OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

25*th April*, 1795.

SIR,

I UNDERSTAND that I am to incur censure by the wine-account of this district not being sent in. Allow me to state the following circumstances to you, which, if they do not apologise for, will at least extenuate my part of the offence.

The general letter was put into my hands sometime about the beginning of this month, as I was then in charge of the district, Mr. Findlater being indisposed. I immediately, as far as in my power, made a survey of

the wine-stocks; and where I could not personally survey, I wrote the officer of the division. In a few days more, and previous to collection-week, Mr. Findlater resumed charge; and as, in the course of collection, he would have both the officers by him, and the old books among his hands, it very naturally occurred to me the wine-account business would rest with him. At the close of that week, I got a note from the collector that the account-making-up was thrown on my hands. I immediately set about it; but one officer's books, James Graham of Sanquhar, not being at hand, I wrote him to send me them by first post. Mr. Graham has not thought proper to pay the least attention to my request, and to-day I have sent an express for his stock-book.

This, Sir, is a plain state of facts; and if I must still be thought censurable, I hope it will be considered that this officiating job being my first, I cannot be supposed to be completely master of all the etiquette of the business.

If my supposed neglect is to be laid before the Honourable Board, I beg you will have the goodness to accompany the complaint with this letter, I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCXLVIII

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

15th December, 1795.

My Dear Friend,

As I am in a complete Decemberish humour, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the Deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathise in it: these four months, a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been so ill, that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence. There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father, for, God knows, they have many peculiar cares.

I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate, even in all the vigour of manhood as I am—such things happen every day—Gracious God! what would become of my little flock? 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune. A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I——. But I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad—

"O that I had ne'er been married.
I would never had nae care," &c.*

24th December.

We have had a brilliant theatre here this season; only, as all other business does, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country—*want of cash.* I mentioned our theatre merely to lug in an occasional Address, which I wrote for the benefit night of one of the actresses, and which is as follows:—

"Still anxious to secure your partial favour,
And not less anxious, sure, this night, than ever," &c.†

25th, Christmas Morning.

This, my much-loved friend, is a morning of wishes; accept mine—so Heaven hear me as they are sincere!—that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favourite author, The Man of Feeling: "May the Great Spirit bear up the weight of thy grey hairs, and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!"

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cowper? Is not the "Task" a glorious poem? The religion of the "Task," bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature—the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your "Zeluco" in return for mine? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters; I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time I had parcelled by, as trash that were scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy, I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

R. B.

* See vol. ii. p. 20. † See vol. i. p. 229.

No. CCCXLIX.

TO THE HON. THE PROVOST, BAILIES, AND TOWN COUNCIL OF DUMFRIES.

GENTLEMEN,

THE literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago your good town did me the honour of making me an honorary Burgess. Will you allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on the footing of a real freeman of the town, in the schools?*

That I may not appear altogether unworthy of this favour, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done a branch of your revenue. The two-pennies exigible on foreign ale vended within your limits: in this rather neglected article of your income I am ready to shew that within these few weeks my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of Ten Pounds; and in this too, I was the only one of the gentlemen of the Excise (except Mr. Mitchell, whom *you pay* for his trouble) who took the least concern in the business.

If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your devoted humble servant,

R. B.

No. CCCL.

TO MR. ALEXANDER FINDLATER,

SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

SIR,

ENCLOSED are the two schemes. I would not have troubled you with the collector's one, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr. Erskine† promised me to make it right, if you will have the goodness to show him how. As I have no copy of the scheme for myself, and the alterations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes.* And that no scheme to betray a FRIEND, or mislead a STRANGER; to seduce a young GIRL, or rob a HEN-ROOST; to subvert LIBERTY, or bribe an EXCISEMAN; to disturb the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or annoy a GOSSIPPING; to overthrow the credit of ORTHODOXY, or the authority of OLD SONGS; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes*—MAY PROSPER—is the sincere wish and prayer of

R. B.

* The request contained in this letter was immediately granted.
† A brother Exciseman of Burns.

No. CCCLI.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

DUMFRIES, 20*th January*, 1796.

I CANNOT express my gratitude to you for allowing me a longer perusal of "Anacharsis." In fact, I never met with a book that bewitched me so much; and I, as a member of the library, must warmly feel the obligation you have laid us under. Indeed, to me the obligation is stronger than to any other individual of our society; as "Anacharsis" is an indispensable desideratum to a son of the Muses.

The health you wished me in your morning's card, is, I think, flown from me for ever. I have not been able to leave my bed to-day till about an hour ago. These wickedly unlucky advertisements I lent (I did wrong) to a friend, and I am ill able to go in quest of him.

The Muses have not quite forsaken me. The following detached stanzas I intend to interweave in some disastrous tale of a shepherd, "Despairing beside a clear stream."

L'amour, toujours l'amour! Volte Subito.

"The trout in yonder wimpling burn
That glides, a silver dart," &c.

Have you seen Clarke's Sonatas, the subjects from Scots airs? If not, send for my copy.

R. B.

No. CCCLII.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

DUMFRIES, 31*st January*, 1796.

THESE many months you have been two packets in my debt—what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess.

Alas! Madam, ill can I afford, at this time, to be deprived of any of the small remnant of my pleasures. I have lately drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too,* and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever, and long the die spun doubtful; until after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once indeed have been before my own door in the street.

"When pleasure fascinates the mental sight,
Affliction purifies the visual ray,
Religion hails the drear, the untried night,
And shuts, for ever shuts! life's doubtful day."

R. B.

No. CCCLIII.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

DUMFRIES, *4th June*, 1796.

I AM in such miserable health as to be utterly incapable of shewing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatisms, I meet every face with a greeting, like that of Balak to Balaam—"Come, curse me Jacob; and come, defy me Israel!" So say I—Come, curse me that east wind; and come, defy me the north! Would you have me in such circumstances copy you out a love-song? . . .

I may perhaps see you on Saturday, but I will not be at the ball. Why should I? "man delights not me, nor woman either!" Can you supply me with the song, "Let us all be unhappy together?" do if you can, and oblige *le pauvre miserable*,

R. B.

No. CCCLIV.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

1796.

I THINK there is little doubt but that your interests, if judiciously directed, may procure a tide-waiter's place for your protegé, Shaw; but, alas, that is doing little for him! Fifteen pounds per annum is the salary; and the perquisites, in some lucky stations, such as Leith, Glasgow, Greenock, may be ten more; but in such a place as this, for instance, they will hardly amount to five. The appointment is not in the Excise, but in the Customs. The way of getting appointed, is just the application of great folks to the Commissioners of the Customs; the almanack will give you their names. The Excise is a superior object, as the salary is fifty per annum. You mention that he has a family: if he has more than three children he cannot be admitted as an Excise officer. To apply there, is the same business as at the Customs. Garthland, if you can commit his sincere zeal in the cause, is, I think, able to do either the one or the other. Find out among your acquaintances, who are the private friends of the Commissioners of the particular board at which you wish to apply, and interest them—the more the better. The Commissioners of both Boards are people quite in the fashionable circles, and must be known to many of your friends. I was going to mention some of your female acquaintance who might give you a lift, but, on recollection, your interest with the Women is, I believe, but a sorry business. So much the better! 'tis God's judgment upon you for making such a despotic use of your sway over the Men. *You* a Republican! You have an empire over us; and you know it too; but the Lord's holy name be praised, you have something of the same propensity to get giddy (intoxicated is not a lady's word) with power; and a devilish deal of aptitude to the same blind undistinguishing favoritism, which make other despots less dangerous to the welfare and repose of mankind than they otherwise might be. So much for scolding you. I have perused your MSS. with a great deal of pleasure. I have taken the liberty to make a few marks with my pencil, which I trust you will pardon. Farewell!

R. B.

No. CCCLV.

TO MRS. RIDDELL.

1796.

I HAVE perused with great pleasure your elegiac verses. In two or three instances I mark inequalities rather than faults. A line that in an ordinary mediocre production might pass, not only without censure, but with applause, in a brilliant composition glares in all its native halting inferiority. The last line of the second stanza I dislike most. If you cannot mend it (I cannot, after beating my brains to pap), I would almost leave out the whole stanza. *A Dieu je vous recommende.*

R. B.

* This child died at Mauchline.

No. CCCLVI.

TO MR. JAMES CLARKE,* SCHOOLMASTER, FORFAR.

DUMFRIES, 26*th June*, 1796.

MY DEAR CLARKE,

STILL, still the victim of affliction! Were you to see the emaciated figure who now holds the pen to you, you would not know your old friend. Whether I shall ever get about again, is only known to Him, the Great Unknown, whose creature I am. Alas, Clarke! I begin to fear the worst. As to my individual self I am tranquil, and would despise myself if I were not; but Burns's poor widow, and half-a-dozen of his dear little ones—helpless orphans! there I am weak as a woman's tear. Enough of this! 'Tis half of my disease.

I duly received your last, enclosing the note. It came extremely in time, and I am much obliged by your punctuality. Again I must request you to do me the same kindness. Be so very good as, by return of post, to enclose me another note. I trust you can do it without inconvenience, and it will seriously oblige me. If I must go, I shall leave a few friends behind me, whom I shall regret while consciousness remains. I know I shall live in their remembrance. Adieu, dear Clarke. That I shall ever see you again is, I am afraid, highly improbable.

R. B.

No. CCCLVII.

TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, 4*th July*, 1796.

How are you, my dear friend, and how comes on your fifth volume? You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but, alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care, has these many months lain heavy on me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural Muse of Scotia.

You are a good, worthy, honest fellow, and have a good right to live in this world—because you deserve it. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more, though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow, consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt much, my ever-dear friend, arrest my sun before he has well reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit or the pathos of sentiment. However, *hope* is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can.

Let me hear from you as soon as convenient. Your work is a great one; and now that it is finished, I see, if we were to begin again, two or three things that might be mended; yet I will venture to prophesy, that to future ages your publication will be the text-book and standard of Scottish song and music.

I am ashamed to ask another favour of you, because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady, who sings well, to whom she wishes to present the "Scots Musical Museum." If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first fly, as I am anxious to have it soon?† Yours ever,

R. B.

No. CCCLVIII.

TO MR. ALEX. CUNNINGHAM.‡

BROW, SEA-BATHING QUARTERS, 7*th July*, 1796.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,

I RECEIVED yours here this moment, and am indeed highly flattered with the approbation of the literary circle you mention—a literary circle inferior to none in the two kingdoms. Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the bard will soon be heard among you no more! For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage. You actually would not know me if you saw me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble, as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled! fled! but I can no more on the subject, only the medical folks tell me that my last and only chance is bathing and country quarters, and riding. The deuce of the matter is this: when an exciseman is off duty, his salary is reduced to £35 instead of £50. What way, in the name of thrift, shall I maintain

* See LIFE.

† "In this humble and delicate manner did poor Burns ask for a copy of a work of which he was principally the founder, and to which he had contributed, gratuitously, not less than 184 original, altered, and collected songs! The editor has seen 180 transcribed by his own hand for the "Museum."—CROMEK.

‡ See LIFE.

myself, and keep a horse in country quarters, with a wife and five children at home, on £35? I mention this, because I had intended to beg your utmost interest, and that of all the friends you can muster, to move our Commissioners of Excise to grant me the full salary ;* I dare say you know them all personally. If they do not grant it me, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poëte ;* if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger.

I have sent you one of the songs; the other my memory does not serve me with, and I have no copy here ; but I shall be at home soon, when I will send it you. Apropos to being at home, Mrs. Burns threatens in a week or two to add one more to my paternal charge, which, if of the right gender, I intend shall be introduced to the world by the respectable designation of *Alexander Cunningham Burns.* My last was *James Glencairn,* so you can have no objection to the company of nobility. Farewell.

R. B.

No. CCCLIX.

TO MR. GILBERT BURNS.

10*th July*, 1796.

Dear Brother,

It will be no very pleasing news to you to be told that I am dangerously ill, and not likely to get better. An inveterate rheumatism has reduced me to such a state of debility, and my appetite is so totally gone, that I can scarcely stand on my legs. I have been a week at sea-bathing, and I will continue there, or in a friend's house in the country, all the summer. God keep my wife and children ; if I am taken from their head, they will be poor indeed. I have contracted one or two serious debts, partly from my illness these many months, partly from too much thoughtlessness as to expense when I came to town, that will cut in too much on the little I leave them in your hands. Remember me to my mother. Yours,

R. B.

No. CCCLX.

TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

Brow, 12*th July*, 1796.

Madam,

I have written you so often, without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again, but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that *bourne whence no traveller returns.* Your friendship, with which for many years you honoured me, was a friendship dearest to my soul. Your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal ! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell !!!

R. B.†

No. CCCLXI.

TO MR. JAMES BURNESS, WRITER, MONTROSE.

Dumfries, 12*th July.*

My Dear Cousin,

When you offered me money assistance, little did I think I should want it so soon. A rascal of a haberdasher, to whom I owe a considerable bill, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process against me, and will infallibly put my emaciated body into jail. Will you be so good as to accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? O, James ! did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me ! Alas ! I am not used to beg ! The worst of it is, my health was coming about finely ; you know, and my physician assured me, that melancholy and low spirits are half my disease : guess, then, my horrors since this business began. If I had it settled, I would be, I think, quite well in a manner. How shall I use the language to you, O do not disappoint me ! but strong necessity's curst command. ‡

* According to Mr. Findlater, the Commissioners of Excise could not grant the full salary in case of absence from duty, but one of them, Graham of Fintry, in Burns' case, made up the difference, which was about five pounds, from his own pocket.

† "Burns had, however, the pleasure of receiving a satisfactory explanation of his friend's silence, and an assurance of the continuance of her friendship to his widow and children ; an assurance that has been amply fulfilled. It is probable that the greater part of her letters to him were destroyed by our bard about the time that this last was written. He did not foresee that his letters to her were to appear in print, nor conceive the disappointment that will be felt, that a few of this excellent lady's have not served to enrich and adorn the collection. The above letter is supposed to be the last production of Robert Burns, who died on the 21st of the month, nine days afterwards." Currie. Several letters of still later date have since come to light.

‡ "James Burness sent his cousin ten pounds the moment he received his letter, though he could ill spare the money, and concealed his kindness from the world, till, on reading the life and letters of the Poet, he was constrained, in support of his own good name, to conceal it no longer. I was informed by my friend, Dr. Burness, that his grandfather, now in his eighty-fourth year, was touched by the dubious way in which I had left the subject in the Poet's life, and felt that he was liable to the imputation of coldness of heart. In a matter of such delicacy, I could not ask the family, and accordingly had left it as I found it, without comment or remark."– Allan Cunningham.

I have been thinking over and over my brother's affairs, and I fear I must cut him up; but on this I will correspond at another time, particularly as I shall [require] your advice.

Forgive me for once more mentioning by return of post—save me from the horrors of a jail!

My compliments to my friend James, and to all the rest. I do not know what I have written. The subject is so horrible, I dare not look it over again. Farewell.

R. B.

No. CCCLXII.

TO JAMES GRACIE, Esq.

Brow, Wednesday Morning,
13*th July*, 1796.

My Dear Sir,

It would [be] doing high injustice to this place not to acknowledge that my rheumatisms have derived great benefits from it already; but, alas! my loss of appetite still continues. I shall not need your kind offer this week, and I return to town the beginning of next week, it not being a tide-week. I am detaining a man in a burning hurry. So, God bless you!

R. B.

No. CCCLXIII.

TO MRS. BURNS.

Brow, Thursday.

My Dearest Love,

I delayed writing until I could tell you what effect sea-bathing was likely to produce. It would be injustice to deny that it has eased my pains, and I think has strengthened me; but my appetite is still extremely bad. No flesh nor fish can I swallow; porridge and milk are the only thing I can taste. I am very happy to hear, by Miss Jess Lewars, that you are all well. My very best and kindest compliments to her, and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband,

R. B.

No. CCCLXIV.

TO MR. JAMES ARMOUR, MASON, MAUCHLINE.

July 10, 1796.

For Heaven's sake, and as you value the welfare of your daughter and my wife, do, my dearest Sir, write to Fife to Mrs. Armour to come if possible. My wife thinks she can yet reckon upon a fortnight. The medical people order me, *as I value my existence*, to fly to sea-bathing and country-quarters, so it is ten thousand chances to one that I shall not be within a dozen miles of her when her hour comes. What a situation for her, poor girl, without a single friend by her on such a serious moment.

I have now been a week at salt-water, and though I think I have got some good by it, yet I have some secret fears that this business will be dangerous, if not fatal. Your most affectionate son,

R. B.

No. CCCLXV.

TO MR. JAMES ARMOUR, MAUCHLINE.

Dumfries, 18*th July* 1796.

My Dear Sir,

Do, for Heaven's sake, send Mrs. Armour here immediately. My wife is hourly expecting to be put to bed. Good God! what a situation for her to be in, poor girl,* without a friend! I returned from sea-bathing quarters to-day, and my medical friends would almost persuade me that I am better; but I think and feel that my strength is so gone, that the disorder will prove fatal to me. Your son-in-law,

R. B.

* Mrs. Burns was not yet thirty years of age.

ANSWER TO THE PETITION OF THOMAS JOHNSTON.

September, 1790.

1. Whether the Petitioner has been in use formerly to malt all his grain at one operation, is foreign to the purpose: this last season he certainly malted his crop at four or five operations; but be that as it may, Mr. J. ought to have known that by express act of parliament no malt, however small the quantity, can be legally manufactured until previous entry be made in writing of all the ponds, barns, floors, &c., so as to be used before the grain can be put to steep. In the Excise entry-books for the division, there is not a syllable of T. J.'s name for a number of years bygone.

2. True it is that Mr, Burns, on his first ride, in answer to Mr. J.'s question anent the conveying of the notices, among other ways pointed out the sending it by post as the most eligible method, but at the same time added this express clause, and to which Mr. Burns is willing to make faith: "At the same time, remember Mr. J., that the notice is at your risk until it reach me!" Further, when Mr. Burns came to the Petitioner's kiln, there was a servant belonging to Mr. J. ploughing at a very considerable distance from the kiln, who left his plough and three horses without a driver, and came into the kiln, which Mr. B. thought was rather a suspicious circumstance, as there was nothing so extraordinary in an Excise-officer going into a legal malt-floor as to make him leave three horses yoked to a plough in the distant middle of a moor. This servant, on being repeatedly questioned by Mr. Burns, could not tell when the malt was put to steep, when it was taken out, &c., in short, was determined to be entirely ignorant of the affair. By and by, Mr. J.'s son came in; and on being questioned as to the steeping, taking out of the grain, &c., Mr. J. junior, referred me to this said servant, this ploughman, who, he said, must remember it best, as having been the principal actor in the business. The lad *then*, having gotten his cue, circumstantially recollected all about it.

All this time, though I was telling the son and servant the nature of the premunire they had incurred, though they pleaded for mercy keenly, the affair of the notice having been sent never once occurred to them, not even the son, who is said to have been the bearer. This was a stroke reserved for, and worthy of the gentleman himself. As to Mrs. Kelloch's oath, it proves nothing. She did, indeed, depone to a line being left for me at her house, which said line miscarried. It was a sealed letter; she could not tell whether it was a malt-notice or not; she could not even condescend on the month, nor so much as the season of the year. The truth is, T. J. and his family being Seceders, and consequently coming every Sunday to Thornhill Meeting-house, they were a good conveyance for the several maltsters and traders in their neighbourhood to transmit to post their notices, permits, &c.

But why all this tergiversation? It was put to the Petitioner in open court, after a full investigation of the cause: "Was he willing to swear that he meant no fraud in the matter?" And the Justices told him, that if he swore, he would be assoilzied, otherwise he should be fined; still the Petitioner, after ten minutes' consideration, found his conscience unequal to the task, and declined the oath.

Now, indeed, he says he is willing to swear: he has been exercising his conscience in private, and will perhaps stretch a point. But the fact to which he is to swear was equally and in all parts known to him on that day when he refused to swear as to-day: nothing can give him further light as to the intention of his mind respecting his meaning or not meaning a fraud in the affair. No time can cast further light on the present resolves of the mind; but time will reconcile, and has reconciled many a man to that iniquity which he at first abhorred.

THE CLARINDA CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN BURNS AND MRS. M'LEHOSE,

COMMENCED DECEMBER, 1787.

No. I.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.*

THURSDAY EVENING, *December* 6, 1787.

MADAM,

I HAD set no small store by my tea-drinking to-night, and have not often been so disappointed. On Saturday evening I shall embrace the opportunity with the greatest pleasure. I leave this town on this day se'ennight, and, probably for a couple of twelvemonths; but must ever regret that I so lately got an acquaintance whom I shall ever highly esteem, and in whose welfare I shall ever be warmly interested.

Our worthy common friend, in her usual pleasant way, rallied me a good deal on my new acquaintance, and in the humour of her ideas I wrote some lines, which I enclose you, as I think they have a good deal of poetic merit; and Miss Nimmo tells me you are not only a critic, but a poetess. Fiction, you know, is the native region of poetry; and I hope you will pardon my vanity in sending you the bagatelle as a tolerable off-hand *jeu-d'esprit*. I have several poetic trifles, which I shall gladly leave with Miss Nimmo, or you, if they were worth house-room; as there are scarcely two people on earth by whom it would mortify me more to be forgotten, though at the distance of nine score miles.—I am, Madam, with the highest respect, your very humble servant,

R. B.

* See LIFE, pp. lv., lvi.

No. II.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

December 8, 1787.

I CAN say with truth, Madam, that I never met with a person in my life whom I more anxiously wished to meet again than yourself. To-night I was to have had that very great pleasure. I was intoxicated with the idea, but an unlucky fall from a coach has so bruised one of my knees that I can't stir my leg off the cushion; so if I don't see you again, I shall not rest in my grave for chagrin. I was vexed to the soul I had not seen you sooner; I determined to cultivate your friendship with the enthusiasm of religion; but thus has Fortune ever served me. I cannot bear the idea of leaving Edinburgh without seeing you. I know not how to account for it—I am strangely taken with some people, nor am I often mistaken. You are a stranger to me; but I am an odd being: some yet unnamed feelings, things, not principles, but better than whims, carry me further than boasted reason ever did a philosopher. Farewell! every happiness be yours!

R. B.

No. I.

MRS. M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

SATURDAY EVENING, *December* 8, 1787.

ENURED as I have been to disappointments, I never felt more, nay, nor half so severely, for one of the same nature!

The cruel cause, too, augments my uneasiness. I trust you 'll soon recover it; meantime, if my sympathy, my friendship, can alleviate your pain, be assured you possess them. I am much flattered at being a favourite of yours. Miss Nimmo can tell you how earnestly I had long pressed her to make us acquainted. I had a presentiment that we should derive pleasure from the society of each other. To-night I had thought of fifty things to say to you; how unfortunate this prevention! Do not accuse Fortune; had I not known she was *blind* before, her ill-usage of *you* had marked it sufficiently. However, she is a fickle, old, envious beldame, and I 'd much rather be indebted to *Nature*. You shall *not* leave town without seeing me, if I should come along with good Miss Nimmo and call for you. I am determined to see you, and am ready to exclaim with Yorick, "Tut! are we not all relations?" We are, indeed, *strangers* in one sense; but of near kin in many respects: these "nameless feelings" I perfectly comprehend, tho' the pen of a Locke could not define them. Perhaps *instinct* comes nearer their description than either "Principles or Whims." Think ye they have any connection with that "heavenly light which leads astray?" One thing I know, that they have a powerful effect upon me; and are delightful when under the check of *reason* and *religion*.

Miss Nimmo was a favourite of mine from the first hour I met her. There is a softness, a nameless something about her that, was I a man, old as she is, I would have chosen her before most women that I know. I fear, however, this liking is not *mutual*, I 'll tell you why I think so at meeting. She was in mere jest when she told you I was a *Poetess*. I have often composed rhyme (if not *reason*), but never one line of *poetry*. The distinction is obvious to every one of the least discernment. Your lines were truly poetical; give me all you can spare. Not one living has a higher relish for poetry than I have; and my reading everything of the kind makes me a tolerable judge. Ten years ago, such lines from such a hand would have half-turned my head. Perhaps you thought it might have done so even *yet*, and wisely premised that "Fiction was the native region of poetry." Read the enclosed, which I scrawled just after reading yours. Be sincere, and own that, whatever merit it has, it has not a line resembling poetry. Pardon any little freedoms I take with you; if they entertain a heavy hour, they have all the merit I intended. Will you let me know, now and then, how your leg is? If I was your *sister* I would call and see you; but 'tis a censorious world this, and in this sense "you and I are not of this world." Adieu. Keep up your heart, you will soon get well, and we shall *meet*. Farewell. God bless you!

A. M.

No. III.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

December 12, 1787.

I STRETCH a point, indeed, my dearest Madam, when I answer your card on the rack of my present agony. Your friendship, Madam! By heavens, I was never proud before. Your lines, I maintain it, are poetry, and good poetry; mine were indeed partly fiction, and partly a friendship which, had I been so blest as to have met with you *in time*, might have led me—God of love only knows where. Time is too short for ceremonies.

I swear solemnly (in all the tenor of my former oath) to remember you in all the pride and warmth of friendship until—I cease to be!

To-morrow, and every day, till I see you, you shall hear from me.

Farewell! May you enjoy a better night's repose than I am likely to have.

R. B.

No. II.

MRS. M'LEHOSE TO ROBERT BURNS.

SUNDAY NOON, *Dec.* 16, 1787.

MISS NIMMO and I had a long conversation last night. Little did I suspect that she was of the party. Gentle, sweet soul! She is accusing herself as the cause of your misfortune. It was in vain I rallied her upon such an excess of sensibility—as I termed it. She is lineally descended from "My Uncle Toby;" has hopes of the devil, and would not hurt a fly. How could you tell me that you were in "agony?" I hope you will swallow laudanum, and procure some ease from sleep. I am glad to hear Mr. Wood attends you. He is a good soul, and a safe surgeon. I know him a little. Do as he bids, and I trust your leg will soon be quite well. When I meet you, I must chide you for writing in your romantic style. Do you remember that she whom you address is a married woman? or—Jacob-like—would you wait seven years, and even then perhaps be disappointed, as he was? No; I know you better: you have too much of that impetuosity which generally accompanies noble minds. To be serious, most people would think, by your style, that you were writing to some vain, silly woman to make a fool of her—or worse. I have too much vanity to ascribe

it to the former motive, and too much charity to harbour an idea of the latter; and viewing it as the effusion of a benevolent heart upon meeting one similar to itself, I have promised you my friendship: it will be your own fault if I ever withdraw it. Would to God I had it in my power to give you some solid proofs of it! Were I the Duchess of Gordon you should be possessed of that independence which every generous mind pants after; but I fear she is "no Duchess at the heart." Obscure as I am (comparatively), I enjoy all the necessaries of life as fully as I desire, and wish for wealth only to procure the "luxury of doing good."

My chief design in writing you to-day was to beg you would not write me often, lest the exertion should hurt you. Meantime, if my scrawls can amuse you in your confinement, you shall have them occasionally. I shall hear of you every day from my beloved Miss Nimmo. Do you know, the very first time I was in her house, most of our conversation was about a certain (lame) poet? I read her soul in her expressive countenance, and have been attached to her ever since. Adieu! Be patient. Take care of yourself, My best wishes attend you.

A. M.

No. IV.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

THURSDAY, *December* 20, 1787.

YOUR last, my dear Madam, had the effect on me that Job's situation had on his friends, when "they sat down seven days and seven nights astonished, and spake not a word." "Pay my addresses to a married woman!" I started as if I had seen the ghost of him I had injured: I recollected my expressions; some of them indeed were, in the law phrase, "habit and repute," which is being half guilty. I cannot positively say, Madam, whether my heart might not have gone astray a little; but I can declare, upon the honour of a poet, that the vagrant has wandered unknown to me. I have a pretty handsome troop of follies of my own; and, like some other people's, they are but undisciplined blackguards. But the luckless rascals have something like honour in them; they would not do a dishonest thing.

To meet with an unfortunate woman, amiable and young, deserted and widowed by those who were bound by every tie of duty, nature, and gratitude, to protect, comfort, and cherish her; add to all, when she is perhaps one of the first of lovely forms and noble minds, the mind, too, that hits one's taste as the joys of heaven do a saint—should a faint idea, the natural child of imagination, thoughtlessly peep over the fence—were you, my friend, to sit in judgment, and the poor, airy straggler brought before you, trembling, self-condemned, with artless eyes, brimful of contrition, looking wistfully on its judge, you could not, my dear Madam, condemn the hapless wretch to death "without benefit of clergy?"

I won't tell you what reply my heart made to your raillery of "seven years;" but I will give you what a brother of my trade says on the same allusion:—

"The patriarch to gain a wife,
Chaste, beautiful, and young,
Served fourteen years a painful life,
And never thought it long.

Oh were you to reward such cares,
And life so long would stay,
Not fourteen but four hundred years
Would seem but as one day!"

I have written you this scrawl because I have nothing else to do, and you may sit down and find fault with it, if you have no better way of consuming your time; but finding fault with the vagaries of a poet's fancy is much such another business as Xerxes chastising the waves of the Hellespont.

My limb now allows me to sit in some peace. To walk I have yet no prospect of, as I can't mark it to the ground.

I have just now looked over what I have written, and it is such a chaos of nonsense that I daresay you will throw it into the fire, and call me an idle, stupid fellow; but whatever you think of my brains, believe me to be, with the most sacred respect and heartfelt esteem, my dear Madam, your humble servant,

R. B.

No. III.

TO MR. ROBERT BURNS.

ON BURNS SAYING HE "HAD NOTHING ELSE TO DO."

CHRISTMAS EVE, 1787.

When first you saw *Clarinda's* charms,
What rapture in your bosom grew!
Her heart was shut to Love's alarms,
But then—you 'd nothing else to do.

Apollo oft had lent his harp,
But now 'twas strung from Cupid's bow:
You sung—it reached *Clarinda's* heart—
She wish'd you 'd nothing else to do.

Fair Venus smil'd, Minerva frown'd,
Cupid observ'd—the arrow flew:
Indifference, ere a week went round,
Show'd you had nothing else to do.

CLARINDA.

No. V.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

December, 21, 1787.

I BEG your pardon, my dear "Clarinda," for the fragment scrawl I sent you yesterday. I really don't know what I wrote. A gentleman, for whose character, abilities, and critical knowledge, I have the highest veneration, called in just as I had begun the second sentence, and I would not make the porter wait. I read to my much-respected friend several of my own bagatelles, and, among others, your lines, which I had copied out. He began some criticism on them as on the other pieces, when I informed him they were the work of a young lady in this town, which, I assure you, made him stare. My learned friend seriously protested that he did not believe any young woman in Edinburgh was capable of such lines; and if you know any thing of Professor Gregory, you will neither doubt of his abilities nor his sincerity. I do love you, if possible, still better for having so fine a taste and turn for poesy. I have again gone wrong in my usual unguarded way, but you may erase the word, and put esteem, respect, or any other tame Dutch expression you please, in its place. I believe there is no holding converse, or carrying on correspondence, with an amiable woman, much less a *gloriously amiable fine woman*, without some mixture of that delicious passion, whose most devoted slave I have more than once had the honour of being. But why be hurt or offended on that account? Can no honest man have a prepossession for a fine woman, but he must run his head against an intrigue? Take a little of the tender witchcraft of love, and add it to the generous, the honourable sentiments of manly friendship; and I know but *one* more delightful morsel, which few, few in any rank ever taste. Such a composition is like adding cream to strawberries; it not only gives the fruit a more elegant richness, but has a peculiar deliciousness of its own.

I enclose you a few lines I composed on a late melancholy occasion—

"Lone on the bleaky hills the straying flocks
Shun the fierce storms among the sheltering rocks;" &c.*

I will not give above five or six copies of it at all, and I would be hurt if any friend should give any copies without my consent. *

You cannot imagine, Clarinda (I like the idea of Arcadian names in a commerce of this kind), how much store I have set by the hopes of your future friendship. I don't know if you have a just idea of my character, but I wish you to see me *as I am*. I am, as most people of my trade are, a strange Will-o'-Wisp being; the victim, too frequently, of much imprudence and many follies. My great constituent elements are *pride* and *passion*. The first I have endeavoured to humanize into integrity and honour; the last makes me a devotee, to the warmest degree of enthusiasm, in love, religion, or friendship—either of them, or all together, as I happen to be inspired. 'Tis true, I never saw you but once; but how much acquaintance did I form with you in that once! Do not think I flatter you, or have a design upon you, Clarinda; I have too much pride for the one, and too little cold contrivance for the other; but of all God's creatures I ever could approach in the beaten way of acquaintance, you struck me with the deepest, the strongest, the most permanent impression. I say the most permanent, because I know myself well, and how far I can promise either on my prepossessions or powers. Why are you unhappy? And why are so many of our fellow-creatures, unworthy to belong to the same species with you, blest with all they can wish? You have a hand all benevolent to give—why were you denied the pleasure? You have a heart formed—gloriously formed—for all the most refined luxuries of love: why was that heart ever wrung? O Clarinda! shall we not meet in a state, some yet unknown state of being, where the lavish hand of Plenty shall minister to the highest wish of benevolence; and where the chill north-wind of Prudence shall never blow over the flowery fields of enjoyment? If we do not, man was made in vain! I deserved most of the unhappy hours that have lingered over my head; they were the wages of my labour: but what unprovoked demon, malignant as hell, stole upon the confidence of unmistrusting busy Fate, and dashed *your* cup of life with undeserved sorrow!

Let me know how long your stay will be out of town; I shall count the hours till you inform me of your return. Cursed *etiquette* forbids you seeing me just now; and so soon as I can walk, I must bid Edinburgh adieu. Lord, why was I born to see misery which I cannot relieve, and to meet with friends whom I cannot enjoy? I look back with the pang of unavailing avarice on my loss in not knowing you sooner: all last winter, these three months past, what luxury of intercourse have I not lost! Perhaps, though, 'twas better for my peace. You see I am either above, or incapable of, dissimulation. I

* See vol. i. p. 133.

* At a later period Burns would not have written the lines.

believe it is want of that particular genius. I despise design, because I want either coolness or wisdom to be capable of it. I am interrupted. Adieu! my dear Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

No. IV.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

Friday Evening, *Dec.* 28, 1787.

I go to the country early to-morrow morning, but will be home by Tuesday—sooner than I expected. I have not time to answer yours as it deserves; nor, had I the age of Methusalem, could I answer it in kind. I shall grow *vain.* Your praises were enough—but those of a Dr. Gregory superadded! Take care, many a "glorious woman" has been undone by having her head turned. "*Know you!*" I know you far better than you do me. Like yourself I am a bit of an enthusiast. In religion and friendship quite a bigot—perhaps I could be so in love too; but everything dear to me in heaven and earth forbids! This is my fixed principle; and the person who would dare to endeavour to remove it I would hold as my chief enemy. Like you, I am incapable of dissimulation; nor am I, as you suppose, unhappy. Possessed of fine children, competence, fame, friends kind and attentive—what a monster of ingratitude should I be in the eye of Heaven were I to style myself unhappy! True, I have met with scenes horrible to recollection, even at six years' distance; but adversity, my friend, is allowed to be the school of Virtue. It oft confers that chastened softness which is unknown among the favourites of Fortune! Even a mind possessed of natural sensibility, without this, never feels that exquisite pleasure which nature has annexed to our sympathetic sorrows. Religion, the only refuge of the unfortunate, has been my balm in every woe. O! could I make her appear to you as she has done to me! Instead of ridiculing her tenets, you would fall down and worship her very semblance wherever you found it!

I will write again at more leisure, and notice other parts of yours. I send you a *simile* upon a character I don't know if you are acquainted with. I am confounded at your admiring my lines. I shall begin to question your taste—but Dr. G.! When I am low-spirited (which I am at times) I shall think of this as a *restorative.*

Now for the simile:—

The morning sun shines glorious and bright,
And fills the heart with wonder and delight!
He dazzles, in meridian splendour seen,
Without a blackening cloud to intervene.
So, at a distance viewed, your genius bright,
Your wit, your flowing numbers give delight.
But, ah! when error's dark'ning clouds arise,
When passion thunders, folly's lightning flies,
More safe we gaze, but admiration dies:
And as the tempting brightness snares the moth,
Sure ruin marks too near approach to both.

Good night; for Clarinda's "heavenly eyes" need the earthly aid of sleep. Adieu.

CLARINDA.

P. S.—I entreat you not to mention our correspondence to one on earth. Though I 've conscious innocence, my situation is a delicate one.

No. V.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

January 1, 1788.

Many happy returns of this day to you, my dear, pleasant friend! May each revolving year find you *wiser and happier!* I embrace the first spare hour to fulfil my promise; and begin with thanking you for the enclosed lines*—they are very pretty: I like the idea of personifying the vices rising in the absence of *Justice.* It is a constant source of refined pleasure, giving "to airy nothings a local habitation and a name," which people of a luxuriant imagination only can enjoy. Yet, to a mind of a benevolent turn, it is delightful to observe how equal the distribution of happiness is among all ranks! If stupid people are rendered incapable of tasting the refined pleasures of the intelligent and feeling mind, they are likewise exempted from the thousand distractions and disquietudes peculiar to sensibility.

I have been staying with a dear female friend who has long been an admirer of yours, and was once on the point of meeting with you in the house of a Mrs. Bruce.† She would have been a much better "Clarinda." She is comely without being beautiful, and has a large share of sense, taste, and sensibility; added to all, a violent penchant for poetry. If ever I have an opportunity, I shall

* On the death of the Lord President Dundas.

† Subsequently became the wife of Mr. James Gray, of the High School, Edinburgh.

make you and her acquainted. No wonder Dr. Gregory criticised my lines. I saw several defects in them myself; but had neither time nor patience (nor ability perhaps) to correct them. The three last verses were longer than the former; and in the conclusion, I saw a vile tautology which I could not get rid of. But you will wonder when I tell you, that I am not only ignorant of every language except my own, but never so much as knew a syllable of the English grammar. If I ever write grammatically, 'tis through mere habit. I rejoice to hear of Dr. Gregory being your particular friend. Though unacquainted, I am no stranger to his character: where worth unites with abilities, it commands our love as well as admiration. Alas! they are too seldom found in one character! Those possessed of great talents would do well to remember that all depends upon the use made of them. Shining abilities, improperly applied, only serve to accelerate our destruction in both worlds. I loved you for your fine taste in poetry long before I saw you; so shall not trouble myself erasing the same word applied in the same way to me.*

You say, "there is no corresponding with an agreeable woman without a mixture of the tender passion." I believe there is no friendship between people of sentiment of different sexes, without a little *softness;* but when kept within proper bounds, it only serves to give higher relish to such intercourse. Love and Friendship are names in every one's mouth; but few, extremely few, understand their meaning. Love (or affection) cannot be genuine if it hesitate a moment to sacrifice every selfish gratification to the happiness of its object. On the contrary, when I would purchase *that* at the expense of *this*, it deserves to be styled—not love, but a name too gross to mention. Therefore, I contend that an honest man may have a friendly prepossession for a woman, whose soul would abhor the idea of an intrigue with her. These are my sentiments on the subject: I hope they correspond with yours.

'Tis honest in you to wish me to see you "*just as you are.*" I believe I have a tolerably just idea of your character. No wonder; for had I been a man, I should have been you. I am not vain enough to think myself equal in abilities; but I am formed with a liveliness of fancy, and a strength of passion little inferior. Situation and circumstances have, however, had the effects on each of us which might be expected. Misfortune has wonderfully contributed to subdue the keenness of my passions, while success and adulation have served to nourish and inflame yours. Both of us are incapable of deceit, because we want coolness and command of our feelings. Art is what I never could attain to, even in situations where a little would have been prudent. Now and then I am favoured with a salutary blast of "the north wind of prudence." The southern zephyrs of kindness too often send up their sultry fogs, and cloud the atmosphere of my understanding. I have thought that Nature threw me off in the same mould, just after you. We were born, I believe, in one year. Madame Nature has some merit by her work that year. Don't you think so? I suppose the Carline has had a flying visit of Venus and the Graces; and Minerva has been jealous of her attention, and sent Apollo with his harp to charm them away.

But why do you accuse Fate for my misfortunes? There is a noble independence of mind which I admire; but, when not checked by Religion, it is apt to degenerate into a criminal arraignment of Providence. No "malignant demon," as you suppose, was "permitted to dash my cup of sorrow:" it was the kindness of a wise and tender Father, who foresaw that I needed chastisement ere I could be brought to Himself. Ah, my friend, Religion converts our heaviest misfortunes into blessings! I feel it to be so. These passions, naturally too violent for my peace, have been broken and moderated by adversity; and if even that has been unable to conquer my vivacity, what length might I not have gone, had I been permitted to glide along in the sunshine of prosperity? I should have forgot my future destination, and fixed my happiness on the fleeting shadows below! My hand was denied the bliss of giving, but Heaven accepts of the wish. My heart was formed for love, and I desire to devote it to Him who is the source of love! Yes, we shall surely meet in an "unknown state of being" where there will be full scope for every kind, heartfelt affection—love without alloy, and without end. Your paragraph upon this made the tears flow down my face! I will not tell you the reflections which it raised in my mind; but I wished that a heart susceptible of such a sentiment took more pains about its accomplishment. I fancy you will not wish me to write again; you 'll think me too serious and grave. I know not how I have been led to do so; but I make no excuse, because I must be allowed to write to you as I feel, or not at all. You say you have "humanized pride into honour and integrity." 'Tis a good endeavour; and could you command your too impetuous passions,† it would be a more glorious achievement than his who conquered the world, and wept because he had no more worlds to subdue. Forgive my freedom with you: I never trouble myself with the faults of those I don't esteem, and only notice those of friends, to themselves. I am pleased with my friends when they tell me mine, and look upon it as a test of real friendship.

I have your Poems in loan just now, I 've read them many times, and with new pleasure. Sometime I shall give you my opinion of them severally. Let me have a sight of some of your "Bagatelles," as you style them.

* Quite unnecessary; it is only toying with dangerous edge-tools.

† "I am formed with a strength of passion little inferior."—Clarinda.

If ever I write any more, you shall have them; and I 'll thank you to correct their errors. I wrote lines on Bishop Geddes, by way of blank verse; but they were what Pope describes, "Where ten low words do creep in one dull line." I believe you (being a genius) have inspired me; for I never wrote so well before. Pray, is Dr. Gregory pious? I have heard so. I wish I knew him. Adieu! You have quantity enough, whatever be the quality! Good night, Believe me your sincere friend,

CLARINDA.

No. VI.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

THURSDAY 3*rd Jan.*, 1788.

I GOT your lines: they are "in *kind!*" I can't but laugh at my presumption in pretending to send my poor ones to *you!* but it was to amuse myself. At this season, when others are joyous, I am the reverse. I have no *near* relations; and while others are with theirs, I sit alone, musing upon several of mine with whom I used to be—now gone to the land of forgetfulness.

You have put me in a rhyming humour. The moment I read yours, I wrote the following lines!—

"Talk not of Love! it gives me pain,
For Love has been my foe:
He bound me in an iron chain,
And plung'd me deep in woe!

But Friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was formed to prove;
The worthy object be of those,
But never talk of Love.

The 'Hand of Friendship' I accept,
May Honour be our guard!
Virtue our intercourse direct,
Her smiles our dear reward."

But I wish to know (in sober prose) how your leg is? I would have enquired sooner, had I known it would have been acceptable. Miss N. informs me now and then; but I have not seen her dear face for some time. Do you think you could venture this length in a coach without hurting yourself? I go out of town the beginning of the week for a few days. I wish you could come to-morrow or Saturday. I long for a conversation with you, and lameness of body won't hinder that. 'Tis really curious—so much *fun* passing between two persons who saw one another only *once!* Say if you think you dare venture; only let the coachman be "adorned with sobriety."

Adieu! Believe me (on my simple word) your real friend and well-wisher,

CLARINDA.

No. VI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

THURSDAY, *January*, 3, 1788.

MY DEAR CLARINDA,

YOUR last verses have so delighted me, that I have copied them in among some of my own most valued pieces, which I keep sacred for my own use. Do let me have a few now and then.

Did you, Madam, know what I feel when you talk of your sorrows!

Good God! that one, who has so much worth in the sight of heaven, and is so amiable to her fellow-creatures, should be so unhappy! I can't venture out for cold. My limb is vastly better; but I have not any use of it without my crutches. Monday, for the first time, I dine in a neighbour's, next door. As soon as I can go so far, *even in a coach*, my first visit shall be to you. Write me when you leave town, and immediately when you return; and I earnestly pray your stay may be short. You can't imagine how miserable you made me when you hinted to me not to write. Farewell.

SYLVANDER.

No. VII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

January 4, 1788.

YOU are right, my dear Clarinda; a friendly correspondence goes for nothing, except one write their undisguised sentiments. Yours please me for their intrinsic merit, as well as because they are *yours*, which, I assure you, is to me a high recommendation. Your religious sentiments, Madam, I revere. If you have, on some suspicious

evidence from some lying oracle, learnt that I despise or ridicule so sacredly important a matter as real religion, you have, my Clarinda, much misconstrued your friend.—"I am not mad, most noble Festus!" Have you ever met a perfect character? Do we not sometimes rather exchange faults than get rid of them? For instance, I am perhaps tired with, and shocked at, a life too much the prey of giddy inconsistencies and thoughtless follies; by degrees I grow sober, prudent, and statedly pious—I say statedly, because the most unaffected devotion is not at all inconsistent with my first character—I join the world in congratulating myself on the happy change. But let me pry more narrowly into this affair. Have I, at bottom, any thing of a secret pride in these endowments and emendations? Have I nothing of a presbyterian sourness, an hypocritical severity, when I survey my less regular neighbours? In a word, have I missed all those nameless and numberless modifications of indistinct selfishness, which are so near our own eyes, that we can scarce bring them within the sphere of our vision, and which the known spotless cambric of our character hides from the ordinary observer?

My definition of worth is short; truth and humanity respecting our fellow-creatures; reverence and humility in the presence of that Being, my Creator and Preserver, and who, I have every reason to believe, will one day be my Judge. The first part of my definition is the creature of unbiassed instinct; the last is the child of after reflection. Where I found these two essentials, I would gently note and slightly mention any attendant flaws—flaws, the marks, the consequences of human nature.

I can easily enter into the sublime pleasures that your strong imagination and keen sensibility must derive from religion, particularly if a little in the shade of misfortune; but I own I cannot, without a marked grudge, see Heaven totally engross so amiable, so charming a woman, as my friend Clarinda; and should be very well pleased at *a circumstance* that would put it in the power of somebody (happy somebody!) to divide her attention with all the delicacy and tenderness of an earthly attachment.

You will not easily persuade me that you have not a grammatical knowledge of the English language—so far from being inaccurate, you are elegant beyond any woman of my acquaintance, except one, whom I wish you knew.

Your last verses to me* have so delighted me, that I have got an excellent old Scots air that suits the measure, and you shall see them in print in the "Scots Musical Museum," a work publishing by a friend of mine in this town. I want four stanzas; you gave me but three, and one of them alluded to an expression in my last letter, so I have taken your two first verses, with a slight alteration in the second, and have added a third; but you must help me to a fourth. Here they are: the latter half of the first stanza would have been worthy of Sappho; I am in raptures with it.

"Talk not of Love, it gives me pain,
For Love has been my foe:
He bound me with an iron chain,
And sunk me deep in woe.

But Friendship's pure and lasting joys
My heart was form'd to prove:
There, welcome, win and wear the prize,
But never talk of Love.

Your friendship much can make me blest,
O why that bliss destroy!
Why urge the only one request
You know I must deny."

The alteration in the second four lines is no improvement, but there was a slight inaccuracy in your rhyme. The third I only offer to your choice, and have left two words for your determination. The air is *The Banks of Spey*, and is most beautiful.

To-morrow evening I intend taking a chair, and paying a visit at Park Place to a much-valued old friend. If I could be sure of finding you at home (and I will send one of the chairmen to call), I would spend from five to six o'clock with you, as I go past. I cannot do more at this time, as I have something on my hand that hurries me much. I propose giving you the first call, my old friend the second, and Miss Nimmo as I return home. Do not break any engagement for me, as I will spend another evening with you, at any rate, before I leave town.

Do not tell me that you are pleased when your friends inform you of your faults. I am ignorant what they are; but I am sure they must be such evanescent trifles, compared with your personal and mental accomplishments, that I would despise the ungenerous, narrow soul, who would notice any imperfections you may seem to have, any other way than in the most delicate agreeable raillery. Coarse minds are not aware how much they injure the keenly feeling tie of bosom-friendship, when, in their foolish officiousness, they mention what nobody cares for recollecting. People of nice sensibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity that fires at being trifled with, or lowered, or even too nearly approached.

You need make no apology for long letters: I am even with you. Many happy New Years to you, charming Clarinda! I can't dissemble, were it to shun perdition. He who sees you as I have done, and does not love you, deserves to be damn'd for his stupidity! He who loves you, and would injure you, deserves to be doubly damn'd for his villany! Adieu.

SYLVANDER.

* Those in Clarinda's Letter, No. VI.

P.S.—What would you think of this for a fourth stanza?

Your thought, if Love must harbour there,
Conceal it in that thought,
Nor cause me from my bosom tear
The very friend I sought.

No. VIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

5th January, 1788.

Some days, some nights, nay, some *hours*, like the "ten righteous persons in Sodom," save the rest of the vapid, tiresome, miserable months and years of life. One of these hours, my dear Clarinda, blest me with yesternight.

"—One well spent hour,
In such a tender circumstance for friends,
Is better than an age of common time."—Thomson.

My favourite feature in Milton's Satan is his manly fortitude in supporting what cannot be remedied; in short, the wild broken fragments of a noble, exalted mind in ruins. I meant no more by saying he was a favourite hero of mine.

I mentioned to you my letter to Dr. Moore, giving an account of my life: it is truth, every word of it, and will give you the just idea of a man whom you have honoured with your friendship. I am afraid you will hardly be able to make sense of so torn a piece. Your verses I shall muse on deliciously, as I gaze on your image in my mind's eye, in my heart's core: they will be in time enough for a week to come. I am truly happy your headache is better. Oh, how can Pain or Evil be so daringly, unfeelingly, cruelly savage as to wound so noble a mind, so lovely a form!

My little fellow* is all my namesake. Write me soon. My every, strongest good wish attend you, Clarinda.

SYLVANDER.

Saturday, Noon.

I know not what I have written. I am pestered with people around me.

No. VII.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

Monday Night, *Jan.* 7, 1788.

I cannot delay thanking you for the packet of Saturday; twice have I read it with close attention. Some parts of it did beguile me of my tears. With Desdemona, I felt "'twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful." When I reached the paragraph where Lord Glencairn is mentioned, I burst out into tears. 'Twas that delightful swell of the heart which arises from a combination of the most pleasurable feelings. Nothing is so binding to a generous mind as placing confidence in it. I have ever felt it so. You seem to have known this feature in my character intuitively; and therefore intrusted me with all your faults and follies. The description of your first love-scene delighted me. It recalled the idea of some tender circumstances which happened to myself, at the same period of life — only mine did not go so far. Perhaps in return, I'll tell you the particulars when we meet. Ah, my friend! our early love emotions are surely the most exquisite. In riper years we may acquire more knowledge, sentiment, &c.; but none of these can yield such rapture as the dear delusions of heart-throbbing youth! Like yours, mine was a rural scene too, which adds much to the tender meeting. But no more of these recollections.

One thing alone hurts me, though I regretted many: your avowal of being an enemy to Calvinism. I guessed it was so by some of your pieces; but the confirmation of it gave me a shock I could only have felt for one I was interested in. You will not wonder at this, when I inform you that I am a strict Calvinist, *one* or *two* dark tenets excepted, which I never meddle with. Like many others, you are so, either from never having examined it with candour and impartiality, or from having unfortunately met with weak professors who did not understand it; and hypocritical ones who made it a cloak of knavery. Both of these, I am aware, abound in country life; nor am I surprised at their having had this effect upon your enlightened understanding. I fear your friend, the captain of the ship,† was of no advantage to you in this and many respects.

My dear Sylvander, I flatter myself you have some opinion of Clarinda's understanding. Her belief in Calvinism is not (as you will be apt to suppose) the prejudice of education. I was bred by my father in the Arminian principles. My mother, who was an angel, died when I was in my tenth year. She was a Calvinist—was adored in her life, and died triumphing in the prospect of immortality. I was too young at that period to know the difference; but her pious precepts and example often recurred to my mind amidst the giddiness and adulation of "Miss in her teens." 'Twas since I came to this town, five years ago, that I imbibed my present principles. They were those of a dear, valued friend, in whose judgment and integrity I had entire confidence. I listened often to him with delight, upon the subject. My mind was docile and open to conviction. I resolved to in-

* Robert Burns, junior, born September, 3, 1786.

† Mr. Brown, to whom several of Burns' letters are addressed.

vestigate with deep attention that scheme of doctrine which had such happy effects upon him. Conviction of understanding, and peace of mind, were the happy consequences. Thus have I given you a true account of my faith. I trust my practice will ever correspond. Were I to narrate my past life as honestly as you have done, you would soon be convinced that neither of us could hope to be justified by our good works.

If you have time and inclination I should wish to hear your chief objections to Calvinism. They have been often confuted by men of great minds and exemplary lives; but perhaps you never enquired into these. Ah Sylvander! Heaven has not endowed you with such uncommon powers of mind to employ them in the manner you have done. This long, serious subject will, I know, have one of *three* effects: either to make you laugh in derision — yawn in supine indifference — or set about examining the hitherto-despised subject. Judge of the interest Clarinda takes in you when she affirms, that there are but few events could take place that would afford her the heartfelt pleasure of the latter.

Read this letter attentively, and answer me at leisure Do not be frightened at its gravity; believe me, I can be as lively as you please. Though I wish Madame Minerva for my guide, I shall not be hindered from rambling sometimes into the realms of Fancy. I must tell you that I admire your narrative, in point of composition, beyond all your other productions. One thing I am afraid of; there is not a trace of friendship towards a female; now, in the case of Clarinda, this is the only "consummation devoutly to be wished."

You told me you never had met with a woman who could love as ardently as yourself. I believe it; and would advise you never to tie yourself till you meet with such a one. Alas! you'll find many who *canna*, and some who *manna;* but to be joined to one of the former description would make you miserable. I think you had almost best resolve against wedlock; for unless a woman were qualified for the companion, the friend, and the mistress, she would not do for you. The last may gain Sylvander, but the others alone can keep him. Sleep, and want of room, prevent my explaining myself upon "infidelity in a husband," which made you stare at me. This and other things shall be matter for another letter, if you are not wishing this to be the last. If agreeable to you, I'll keep the narrative till we meet. Adieu! "Charming Clarinda" must e'en resign herself to the arms of Morpheus.—Your true friend,

CLARINDA.

P.S.—Don't detain the porter. Write when convenient.

TUESDAY MORNING.

I am probably to be in your Square this afternoon, near two o'clock. If your room be to the street, I shall have the pleasure of giving you a nod. I have paid the porter, and you may do so when you write. I am sure they sometimes have made us pay double. Adieu!

No. IX.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

January 8, 1788.

I AM delighted, charming Clarinda, with your honest enthusiasm for religion. Those of either sex, but particularly the female, who are lukewarm in that most important of all things—"O my soul, come not thou into their secrets!"

I feel myself interested in your good opinion, and will lay before you the outline of my belief:—He who is our Author and Preserver, and will one day be our Judge, must be—not for His sake, in the way of duty, but from the natural impulse of our hearts—the object of our reverential awe and grateful adoration. He is almighty, and all bounteous; we are weak and dependent: hence prayer and every other sort of devotion. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life:" consequently, it must be in every one's power to embrace His offer of "everlasting life;" otherwise he could not, in justice, condemn those who did not. A mind pervaded, actuated, and governed by purity, truth, and charity, though it does not *merit* heaven, yet is an absolutely necessary pre-requisite, without which heaven can neither be obtained nor enjoyed; and, by divine promise, such a mind shall never fail of attaining "everlasting life:" hence, the impure, the deceiving, and the uncharitable, exclude themselves from eternal bliss, by their unfitness for enjoying it. The Supreme Being has put the immediate administration of all this, for wise and good ends known to Himself, into the hands of Jesus Christ, a great personage, whose relation to Him we cannot comprehend, but whose relation to us is that of a Guide and Saviour; and who, except for our own obstinacy and misconduct, will bring us all, through various ways, and by various means, to bliss at last.

These are my tenets, my lovely friend; and which, I think, cannot be well disputed. My creed is pretty nearly expressed in the last clause of Jamie Dean's grace, an honest weaver in Ayrshire; "Lord, grant that we may lead a gude life! for a gude life maks a gude end, at least it helps weel!"

I am flattered by the entertainment you tell me you have found in my packet.* You see me as I have been,

* His autobiography, which he wrote out for Dr. Moore.

you know me as I am, and may guess at what I am likely to be. I too may say, "Talk not of Love, &c.," for indeed he has "plunged me in deep woe!" Not that I ever saw a woman who pleased unexceptionably, as my Clarinda elegantly says, "in the companion, the friend, and the mistress." *One* indeed I could except—*One*, before passion threw its mists over my discernment, I knew—*the* first of women! Her name is indelibly written in my heart's core—but I dare not look in on it—a degree of agony would be the consequence. Oh! thou perfidious, cruel, mischief-making demon, who presidest o'er that frantic passion—thou mayest, thou dost poison my peace, but shalt not taint my honour! I would not, for a single moment, give an asylum to the most distant imagination that would shadow the faintest outline of a selfish gratification, at the expense of *her* whose happiness is twisted with the threads of my existence. May she be happy as she deserves! And if my tenderest, faithful friendship can add to her bliss, I shall at least have one solid mine of enjoyment in my bosom! *Don't guess at these ravings!*

I watched at our front window to-day, but was disappointed. It has been a day of disappointments. I am just risen from a two hours' bout after supper, with silly or sordid souls, who could relish nothing in common with me—but the Port. *One!*——'tis now "witching time of night;" and whatever is out of joint in the foregoing scrawl, impute it to enchantments and spells; for I can't look over it, but will seal it up directly, as I don't care for to-morrow's criticisms on it.

You are by this time fast asleep, Clarinda; may good angels attend and guard you as constantly and faithfully as my good wishes do!

> "Beauty, which, whether waking or asleep,
> Shot forth peculiar graces."

John Milton, I wish thy soul better rest than I expect on my pillow to-night! O for a little of the cart-horse part of human nature! Good night, my dearest Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

No. VIII.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

Wednesday, 10 p.m., *Jan.* 9, 1788.

This moment your letter was delivered to me. My boys are asleep. The youngest has been for sometime in a crazy state of health, but has been worse these two days past. Partly this, and the badness of the day, prevented my exchanging a heartfelt "How d'ye," yesterday. Friday, if nothing prevents, I shall have that pleasure, about two o'clock, or a little before it.

I wonder how you could write so distinctly after two or three hours over a bottle; but they were not congenial whom you sat with, and therefore your spirits remained unexhausted; and when quit of them, you fled to a friend who can relish most things in common with you (except port). 'Tis dreadful what a variety of these "silly, sordid souls" one meets with in life! but in scenes of mere sociality these pass. In reading the account you gave of your inveterate turn for social pleasures, I smiled at its resemblance to my own. It is so great that I often think I had been a man but for some mistake of Nature. If you saw me in a merry party, you would suppose me only an enthusiast in *fun;* but I now avoid parties. My spirits are sunk for days after; and, what is worse, there are sometimes dull or malicious souls who censure me loudly for what their sluggish natures cannot comprehend. Were I possessed of an independent fortune, I would scorn their pitiful remarks; but everything in my situation renders prudence necessary.

I have slept little these two nights. My child was uneasy, and that kept me awake watching him. Sylvander, if I have merit in anything, 'tis in an unremitting attention to my two children; but it cannot be denominated merit, since 'tis as much inclination as duty. A prudent woman (as the world goes) told me she was surprised I loved them, "considering what a father they had." I replied with acrimony, I could not but love my children in any case; but my having given them the misfortune of such a father endears them doubly to my heart; they are innocent: they depend upon me; and I feel this the most tender of all claims. While I live, my fondest attention shall be theirs.

All my life I loved the unfortunate, and ever will. Did you ever read Fielding's Amelia? If you have not, I beg you would. There are scenes in it, tender, domestic scenes, which I have read over and over, with feelings too delightful to describe! I meant a "Booth," as such a one is infinitely to be preferred to a brutal, though perhaps constant husband. I can conceive a man, fond of his wife, yet (Sylvander-like) hurried into a momentary deviation, while his heart remained faithful. If he concealed it, it could not hurt me; but if, unable to bear the anguish of self-reproach, he unbound it to me, I would not only forgive him, but comfort and speak kindly, and in secret only weep. Reconciliation in such a case would be exquisite beyond almost anything I can conceive! Do you now understand me on this subject? I was uneasy till it was explained; for all I have said, I know not if I had been an "Amelia," even with a "Booth."* My resent-

* More likely not than otherwise.

ments are keen, like all my other feelings: I am exquisitely alive to kindness and to unkindness. The first binds me for ever! But I have none of the spaniel in my nature. The last would soon cure me, though I loved to distraction. But all this is not perhaps interesting to Sylvander. I have seen nobody to-day; and like a true egotist, talk away to please myself. I am not in a humour to answer your creed to-night.

I have been puzzling my brain about the fair one you bid me "not guess at." I first thought it your Jean; but I don't know if she now possesses your "tenderest, faithfulest friendship." I can't understand that bonie lassie: her refusal, after such proofs of love, proves her to be either an angel or a dolt. I beg pardon, I know not all the circumstances, and am no judge therefore. I love you for your continued fondness, even after enjoyment: few of your sex have souls in such cases. But I take this to be the test of true love—mere desire is all that the bulk of people are susceptible of; and that is soon satisfied. "*Your good wishes.*" You had mine, Sylvander, long before I saw you. You will have them while I live. With you, I wish I had a little of the "cart-horse" in me. You and I have some horse properties; but more of the eagle, and too much of the turtle-dove! Good night!—Your friend,

CLARINDA.

THURSDAY MORNING.

This day is so good that I'll make out my call to your Square. I am laughing to myself at announcing this for the third time. Were she "who poisons your peace" to intend you a Pisgah view, she could do no more than I have done on this trivial occasion. Keep a good heart, Sylvander; the eternity of your long-sufferings will be ended before six weeks. Such perjuries "the laughing gods allow." But remember there is no such toleration in friendship, and—I am yours,

CLARINDA.

No. X.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

January 10, 1788.

I AM certain I saw you, Clarinda; but you don't look to the proper story for a poet's lodging—

"Where speculation roosted near the sky."

I could almost have thrown myself over for very vexation. Why didn't you look higher? It has spoiled my peace for this day. To be so near my charming Clarinda; to miss her look while it was searching for me. I am sure the soul is capable of disease, for mine has convulsed itself into an inflammatory fever. I am sorry for your little boy: do let me know to-morrow how he is.

You have converted me, Clarinda (I shall love that name while I live: there is heavenly music in it). Booth and Amelia I know well.* Your sentiments on that subject, as they are on every subject, are just and noble. "To be feelingly alive to kindness and to unkindness" is a charming female character.

What I said in my last letter, the powers of fuddling sociality only know for me. By yours, I understand my good star has been partly in my horizon when I got wild in my reveries. Had that evil planet, which has almost all my life shed its baleful rays on my devoted head, been, as usual, in its zenith, I had certainly blabbed something that would have pointed out to you the dear object of my tenderest friendship, and, in spite of me, something more. Had that fatal information escaped me (and it was merely chance, or kind stars, that it did not), I had been undone! You would never have written me, except perhaps *once* more! O, I could curse circumstances, and the coarse tie of human laws, which keeps fast what common sense would loose, and which bars that happiness itself cannot give—happiness which, otherwise, Love and Honour would warrant! But hold, I shall make no more "hair-breadth 'scapes."

My friendship, Clarinda, is a life-rent business. My likings are both strong and eternal. I told you I had but one male friend: I have but two female. I should have a third, but she is surrounded by the blandishments of flattery and courtship. The name I register in my heart's core is *Peggy Chalmers:* Miss Nimmo can tell you how divine she is. She is worthy of a place in the same bosom with my Clarinda? That is the highest compliment I can pay her. Farewell, Clarinda! Remember

SYLVANDER.

No. IX.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

THURSDAY EVENING, *January* 10, 1788.

I COULD not see you, Sylvander, though I had twice traversed the Square. I'm persuaded you saw not me neither. I met the young lady I meant to call for first, and returned to seek another acquaintance, but found her moved. All

* Alluding to Fielding's novel of "Amelia."

the time, my eye soared to poetic heights, *alias* garrets, but not a glimpse of you could I obtain! You surely was within the glass at least. I returned, finding my intrinsic dignity a good deal hurt, as I missed my friend. Perhaps I shall see you again next week: say how high you are. Thanks for your enquiry about my child; his complaints are of a tedious kind, and require patience and resignation. Religion has taught me both. By nature I inherit as little of them as a certain harum-scarum friend of mine. In what respects has Clarinda "converted you?" Tell me. It were an arduous task indeed!

Your "ravings" last night, and your ambiguous remarks upon them, I cannot, perhaps ought not to comprehend. I am your friend, Sylvander: take care lest Virtue demand even Friendship as a sacrifice. You need not curse the tie of human laws; since what is the happiness Clarinda would derive from being loosed? At present, she enjoys the hope of having her children provided for. In the other case, she is left, indeed, at liberty, but half dependent on the bounty of a friend—kind in substantials, but having no feelings of romance: and who are the generous, the disinterested, who would risk the world's "dread laugh" to protect her and her little ones? Perhaps a Sylvander-like son of "whim and fancy" might, in a sudden fit of romance: but would not ruin be the consequence? Perhaps one of the former . . . yet if he was not dearer to her than all the world—such are still her romantic ideas—she could not be his.

You see, Sylvander, you have no cause to regret my bondage. The above is a true picture. Have I not reason to rejoice that I have it not in my power to dispose of myself? (I commit myself into thy hands, thou Supreme Disposer of all events! do Thou with me as seemeth to Thee good!) Who is this one male friend? I know your third female. Ah, Sylvander! many "that are first shall be last," and *vice versa!* I am proud of being compared to Miss Chalmers: I have heard how amiable she is. She cannot be more so than Miss Nimmo: why do you not register her also? She is warmly your friend; surely you are incapable of ingratitude. She has almost wept to me at mentioning your intimacy with a certain famous or rather infamous man in town.* Do you think Clarinda could anger you just now? I composed lines addressed to you some time ago, containing a hint upon the occasion. I had not courage to send them then: if you say you'll not be angry, I will yet.

I know not how 'tis, but I felt an irresistible impulse to write you the moment I read yours. I have a design in it. Part of your interest in me is owing to mere novelty. You'll be tired of my correspondence ere you leave town, and will never fash to write me from the country. I forgive you in a "state of celibacy." Sylvander, I wish I saw you happily married: you are so formed, you cannot be happy without a tender attachment. Heaven direct you!

When you see Bishop Geddes, ask him if he remembers a lady at Mrs. Kemp's, on a Sunday night, who listened, with the gaze of attention, to every word he uttered. I saw he observed me, and returned that glance of cordial warmth which assured me he was pleased with my delicate flattery. I wished that night he had been my father, that I might shelter me in his bosom.

You shall have this, as you desired, to-morrow; and, if possible, none for four or five days. I say, if possible: for I really can't but write, as if I had "nothing else to do." I admire your Epitaph; but while I read it, my heart swells at the sad idea of its realization. Did you ever read Sancho's Letters? they would hit your taste. My next will be on my favourite theme—religion.

Farewell, Sylvander! Be wise, be prudent, and be happy.

CLARINDA.

FRIDAY, ONE O'CLOCK.

Let your next be sent in the morning.

If you were well, I would ask you to meet me to-morrow, at twelve o'clock. I go down in the Leith Fly, with poor Willie: what a pleasant chat we might have! But I fancy 'tis impossible. Adieu!

* Probably William Nicol.

No. XI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

SATURDAY EVENING, *Jan.* 12, 1788.

YOUR thoughts on religion, Clarinda, shall be welcome. You may perhaps distrust me when I say 'tis also *my* favourite topic; but mine is the religion of the bosom. I hate the very idea of controversial divinity; as I firmly believe that every honest upright man, of whatever sect, will be accepted of the Deity. If your verses, as you seem to hint, contain censure, except you want an occasion to break with me, don't send them. I have a little infirmity in my disposition, that where I fondly love, or highly esteem, I cannot bear reproach.

"Reverence thyself" is a sacred maxim; and I wish to cherish it. I think I told you Lord Bolingbroke's saying to Swift—"Adieu, dear Swift! with all thy faults I love thee entirely: make an effort to love me with all mine." A glorious sentiment, and without which there can be no friendship! I do highly, very highly, esteem you, Clarinda:

you merit it all! Perhaps, too (I scorn dissimulation), I could fondly love you; judge then what a maddening sting your reproach would be. "O! I have sins to heaven, but none to you." With what pleasure would I meet you to-day, but I cannot walk to meet the Fly. I hope to be able to see you, *on foot*, about the middle of next week. I am interrupted—perhaps you are not sorry for it. You will tell me; but I won't anticipate blame. O Clarinda! did you know how dear to me is your look of kindness, your smile of approbation, you would not, either in prose or verse, risk a censorious remark.

"Curst be the verse, how well so e'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe!"

SYLVANDER.

No. XII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Saturday, *Jan.* 12, 1788.

You talk of weeping, Clarinda! Some involuntary drops wet your lines as I read them. *Offend me*, my dearest angel! You cannot offend me—you never offended me. If you had ever given me the least shadow of offence, so pardon me, my God, as I forgive Clarinda. I have read yours again; it has blotted my paper. Though I find your letter has agitated me into a violent headache, I shall take a chair, and be with you about eight. A friend is to be with us to tea, on my account, which hinders me from coming sooner. Forgive, my dearest Clarinda, my unguarded expressions! For Heaven's sake, forgive me, or I shall never be able to bear my own mind. Your unhappy

SYLVANDER.

No. X.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

Sunday Evening, *January* 13, 1788.

I will not deny it, Sylvander, last night was one of the most exquisite I ever experienced. Few such fall to the lot of mortals! Few, extremely few, are formed to relish such refined enjoyment. That it should be so, vindicates the wisdom of Heaven. But, though our enjoyment did not lead beyond the limits of virtue, yet to-day's reflections have not been altogether unmixed with regret. The idea of the pain it would have given, were it known to a friend to whom I am bound by the sacred ties of gratitude (no more);* the opinion Sylvander may have formed from my unreservedness; and, above all, some secret misgivings that Heaven may not approve, situated as I am—these procured me a sleepless night; and, though at church, I am not at all well.

Sylvander, you saw Clarinda last night, behind the scenes! Now, you 'll be convinced she has faults. If she knows herself, her intention is always good; but she is too often the victim of sensibility, and, hence, is seldom pleased with herself. A rencontre to-day I will relate to you, because it will show you I have my own share of pride. I met with a sister of Lord Napier, at the house of a friend with whom I sat between sermons: I knew who she was, but paid her no other marks of respect than I do to any gentlewoman. She eyed me with minute, supercilious attention, never looking at me when I spoke, but even half interrupted me, before I had done addressing the lady of the house. I felt my face glow with resentment, and consoled myself with the idea of being her superior in every respect but the accidental, the trifling one of birth! I was disgusted at the fawning deference the lady showed her; and when she told me at the door that it was my Lord Napier's sister, I replied, "Is it indeed? by her breeding I should have taken her for the daughter of some upstart tradesman!"

Sylvander, my sentiments as to birth and fortune are truly unfashionable: I despise the persons who pique themselves on either—the former especially. Something may be allowed to bright talents, or even external beauty—these belong to us essentially; but birth in no respect can confer merit, because it is not our own. A person of vulgar, uncultivated mind I would not take to my bosom, in any station; but one possessed of natural genius, improved by education and diligence, such an one I 'd take for my friend, be her extraction ever so mean. These, alone, constitute any real distinction between man and man. Are we not all the offspring of Adam? Have we not one God? one Saviour? one Immortality? I have found but one among all my acquaintance who agreed with me—my Mary, whom I mentioned to you. I am to spend to-morrow with her, if I am better. I like her the more that she likes you.

I intended to resume a little upon your favourite topic, the "Religion of the Bosom." Did you ever imagine that I meant any other? Poor were that religion and unprofitable whose seat is merely in the brain. In most points

* Probably Lord Craig, her cousin.

we seem to agree: only I found all my hopes of pardon and acceptance with Heaven upon the merit of Christ's atonement—whereas you do upon a good life. You think "it helps weel, at least." If anything we could do had been able to atone for the violation of God's Law, where was the need (I speak it with reverence) of such an astonishing Sacrifice? Job was an "upright man." In the dark season of adversity, when other sins were brought to his remembrance, he boasted of his integrity; but no sooner did God reveal Himself to him, than he exclaims, "Behold I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes." Ah! my friend, 'tis pride that hinders us from embracing Jesus! we would be our own Saviour, and scorn to be indebted even to the "Son of the Most High." But this is the only sure foundation of our hopes. It is said by God Himself, "it is to some a stumbling-block: to others foolishness;" but they who believe, feel it to be the "wisdom of God, and the power of God." If my head did not ache, I would continue the subject. I, too, hate controversial religion; but this is the "Religion of the Bosom." My God! Sylvander, why am I so anxious to make you embrace the Gospel? I dare not probe too deep for an answer—let your heart answer: in a word—Benevolence. When I return, I'll finish this. Meantime, adieu! Sylvander, I intended doing you good: if it prove the reverse, I shall never forgive myself. Good night.

TUESDAY, NOON.

Just returned from the Dean, where I dined and supped with fourteen of both sexes: all stupid. My Mary and I alone understood each other. However, we were joyous, and I sung in spite of my cold; but no wit. 'Twould have been pearls before swine literalized. I recollect promising to write you. Sylvander, you 'll never find me worse than my word. If you have written me (which I hope), send it to me when convenient, either at nine in the morning or evening. I fear your limb may be worse from staying so late. I have other fears too: guess them! Oh! my friend, I wish ardently to maintain your esteem; rather than forfeit one iota of it, I 'd be content never to be wiser than now. Our last interview has raised you very high in mine. I have met with few indeed of your sex who understood delicacy in such circumstances; yet 'tis that only which gives relish to such delightful intercourse. Do you wish to preserve my esteem, Sylvander? do not be proud to Clarinda! She deserves it not. I subscribe to Lord B.'s sentiment to Swift; yet some faults I shall still sigh over, though you style it "reproach" even to hint them. Adieu! You have it much in your power to add to the happiness of

CLARINDA.

No. XIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

MONDAY EVENING, 11 O'CLOCK, *January* 14.

WHY have I not heard from you, Clarinda? To-day I expected it; and before supper, when a letter to me was announced, my heart danced with rapture: but behold, 'twas some fool, who had taken it into his head to turn poet, and made me an offer of the first-fruits of his nonsense. "It is not poetry, but prose run mad."

Did I ever repeat to you an epigram I made on a Mr. Elphinstone,* who has given a translation of Martial, a famous Latin poet? The poetry of Elphinstone can only equal his prose notes. I was sitting in a merchant's shop of my acquaintance, waiting somebody; he put Elphinstone into my hand, and asked my opinion of it; I begged leave to write it on a blank leaf, which I did.

TO MR. ELPHINSTONE, &c.

"O thou, whom Poesy abhors!
Whom prose has turned out of doors!
Heardst thou yon groan? proceed no further!
'Twas laurel'd Martial roaring murther!"

I am determined to see you, if at all possible, on Saturday evening. Next week I must sing—

"The night is my departing night,
The morn 's the day I maun awa':
There 's neither friend nor foe o' mine,
But wishes that I were awa'!
What I hae done for lack o' wit,
I never, never can reca';
I hope ye 're a' my friends as yet,
Gude night, and joy be wi' you a'!"

If I could see you sooner, I would be so much the happier; but I would not purchase the *dearest gratification* on earth, if it must be at your expense in worldly censure, far less, inward peace!

I shall certainly be ashamed of thus scrawling whole sheets of incoherence. The only *unity* (a sad word with poets and critics!) in my ideas, is CLARINDA. There my heart "reigns and revels."

"What art thou, Love? whence are those charms,
That thus thou bear'st an universal rule?
For thee the soldier quits his arms,
The king turns slave, the wise man fool.
In vain we chase thee from the field,
And with cool thoughts resist the yoke:
Next tide of blood, alas! we yield,
And all those high resolves are broke!"

* Of this gentleman little more is known than is here stated.

I like to have quotations ready for every occasion. They give one's ideas so pat, and save one the trouble of finding expressions adequate to one's feelings. I think it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, loves, &c., an embodied form in verse, which, to me, is ever immediate ease. Goldsmith says finely of his Muse—

> "Thou source of all my bliss and all my woe;
> Who found me poor at first, and keep'st me so."

My limb has been so well to-day, that I have gone up and down stairs often without my staff. To-morrow I hope to walk once again on my own legs to dinner. It is only next street. Adieu.

SYLVANDER.

No. XIV.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Tuesday Evening, *January* 15, 1788.

That you have faults, my Clarinda, I never doubted; but I knew not where they existed, and Saturday night made me more in the dark than ever. O Clarinda! why would you wound my soul by hinting that "last night must have lessened my opinion of you!" True, I was "behind the scenes with you;" but what did I see? A bosom glowing with honour and benevolence; a mind ennobled by genius, informed and refined by education and reflection, and exalted by native religion, genuine as in the climes of heaven; a heart formed for all the glorious meltings of friendship, love, and pity. These I saw. I saw the noblest immortal soul creation ever showed me.

I looked long, my dear Clarinda, for your letter; and am vexed that you are complaining. I have not caught you so far wrong as in your idea, that the commerce you have with one friend hurts you, if you cannot tell every tittle of it to another. Why have so injurious a suspicion of a good God, Clarinda, as to think, that Friendship and Love, on the sacred inviolate principles of Truth, Honour, and Religion, can be any thing else than an object of His divine approbation?

I have mentioned, in some of my former scrawls, Saturday evening next. Do allow me to wait on you that evening. Oh, my angel! how soon must we part!—and when can we meet again? I look forward on the horrid interval with tearful eyes! What have I not lost by not knowing you sooner? I fear, I fear my acquaintance with you is too short, to make that lasting impression on your heart I could wish.

SYLVANDER.

No. XI.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

Wednesday Morning, *Jan.* 16, 1788.

Your mother's wish was fully realized. I slept sounder to-night than for weeks past, and I had "a blythe waukening;" for your letter was the first object my eyes opened on. Sylvander, I fancy you and "Vulcan" are intimates: he had lent you a key which opens Clarinda's heart at pleasure—shews you what is there, and enables you to adapt yourself to its every feeling! I believe I shall give over writing you. Your letters are too much! my way is, alas! "hedged in;" but had I, like Sylvander, "the world before me," I should bid him, "if he had a friend that loved me," tell him to write as he does, and "that would woo me." Seriously, you are the first letter-writer I ever knew, and I only wonder how you can be *fashed* with my scrawls. I impute it to partiality.

Either *to-morrow*, or *Friday*, I shall be happy to see you. On *Saturday*, I am not *sure* of being alone, or at home. Say which you 'll come? Come to tea if you please; but eight will be an hour less liable to intrusions. I hope you 'll *come afoot*, even tho' you take a chair home. A chair is so uncommon a thing in our neighbourhood, it is apt to raise speculation; but they are all asleep by ten. I 'm happy to hear of your being able to "*walk*"—even to the next street. You are a consummate flatterer; really my cheeks glow when I read your flights of fancy. I fancy you see I like it, when you peep into the *Repository*. I know none insensible to that "delightful essence." If I grow *affected* or *conceited*, you are alone to blame. Ah! my friend, these are disgusting qualities! but I 'm not afraid. I know any merit I have perfectly; but I know *many* sad *counterbalances*.

Your lines of Elphinstone are clever, beyond anything I ever saw of the kind; I know the character—the figure is enough to make one cry *Murder!* He is a complete pedant in language; but are not you and I pedants in something else? Yes, but in far superior things—Love, Friendship, Poesy, Religion! Ah, Sylvander! you have murdered Humility, and I can say thou didst it.

You carry your warmth too far as to Miss Napier (not Nairn); yet I am pleased at it. She is sensible, lively,

and well-liked, they say. She was not to know Clarinda was "divine," and therefore kept her distance. She is comely, but a thick bad figure, waddles in her pace, and has rosy cheeks.

Wha is that clumsy damsel there?
"Whisht! it 's the daughter of a Peer.
Right Honourably Great!"

The daughter of a Peer, I cried,
It doth not *yet* appear
What we *shall* be (in t'other world),
God keep us frae this here!
That she has *Blude*, I 'se no dispute,
I see it in her face;
Her honour's in her *name*, I fear,
And in nae other place.

I hate myself for being satirical—hate me for it too. I 'll certainly go to Miers to please you, either with Mary or Miss N. Sylvander, some most interesting parts of yours I cannot enter upon at present. I dare not think upon parting—upon *the interval;* but I 'm sure both are wisely order'd for our good. A line in return to tell me which night you 'll be with me—"*lasting impression!*" Your key might have shewn you me better. Say

"My lover, poet, and my friend,
What day next month th' Eternity will end?"

When you use your key, don't rummage too much, lest you find I am half as great a fool in the *tender* as yourself. Farewell, Sylvander! I may sign, for I am already sealed, your friend,

CLARINDA.

No. XV.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Saturday Morning, 19*th Jan.*, 1788.

There is no time, my Clarinda, when the conscious thrilling chords of Love and Friendship give such delight as in the pensive hours of what our favourite Thomson calls "philosophic melancholy." The sportive insects, who bask in the sunshine of Prosperity, or the worms that luxuriantly crawl amid their ample wealth of earth; they need no Clarinda—they would despise Sylvander, if they dared. The family of Misfortune, a numerous group of brothers and sisters!—they need a resting-place to their souls. Unnoticed, often condemned by the world—in some degree, perhaps, condemned by themselves—they feel the full enjoyment of ardent love, delicate tender endearments, mutual esteem, and mutual reliance.

In this light I have often admired religion. In proportion as we are wrung with grief, or distracted with anxiety, the ideas of a compassionate Deity, an Almighty Protector, are doubly dear.

"'Tis this, my Friend, that streaks our morning bright;
'Tis this that gilds the horrors of our night."

I have this morning been taking a peep through, as Young finely says, "the dark postern of time long elapsed;" and you will easily guess 'twas a rueful prospect! what a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! My life reminded me of a ruined temple: what strength, what proportion in some parts!—what unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others! I kneeled down before the Father of mercies, and said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!" I rose eased and strengthened. I despise the superstition of a fanatic; but I love the religion of a man. "The future," said I to myself, "is still before me: there let me

'On reason build resolve—
That column of true majesty in man!'

I have difficulties many to encounter," said I; "but they are not absolutely insuperable:—and where is firmness of mind shown but in exertion? Mere declamation is bombastic rant. Besides, wherever I am, or in whatever situation I may be,

'Tis nought to me,
Since God is ever present, ever felt,
In the void waste as in the city full;
And where he vital breathes, there must be joy!'"

Saturday Night—*Half after Ten.*

What luxury of bliss I was enjoying this time yesternight! My ever-dearest Clarinda, you have stolen away my soul: but you have refined, you have exalted it: you have given it a stronger sense of virtue, and a stronger relish for piety.—Clarinda, first of your sex! if ever I am the veriest wretch on earth to forget you; if ever your lovely image is effaced from my soul,

"May I be lost, no eye to weep my end:
And find no earth that 's base enough to bury me!"

What trifling silliness is the childish fondness of the every-day children of the world! 'Tis the unmeaning toying of the younglings of the fields and forests: but where Sentiment and Fancy unite their sweets; where Taste and Delicacy refine; where Wit adds the flavour, and Good Sense gives strength and spirit to all; what a delicious draught is the hour of tender endearment!—

Beauty and Grace, in the arms of Truth and Honour, in all the luxury of mutual love!

Clarinda, have you ever seen the picture realized? Not in all its very richest colouring, but

> "Hope, thou nurse of young Desire,
> Fair promiser of Joy."

Last night, Clarinda, but for one slight shade, was the glorious picture—

> "Innocence
> Look'd gaily smiling on; while rosy Pleasure
> Hid young Desire amid her flowery wreath,
> And pour'd her cup luxuriant, mantling high
> The sparkling heav'nly vintage—Love and Bliss!"

Clarinda, when a poet and poetess of Nature's making—two of Nature's noblest productions—when they drink together of the same cup of Love and Bliss, attempt not, ye coarser stuff of human nature, profanely to measure enjoyment ye never can know! Good night, my dear Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

No. XII.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

SATURDAY EVENING, *Jan.* 19, 1788.

I AM wishing, Sylvander, for the power of looking into your heart. It would be but fair, for you have the key of mine. You are possessed of acute discernment. I am not deficient either in that respect. Last night must have shown you Clarinda not "divine," but as she really is. I can't recollect some things I said, without a degree of pain. Nature has been kind to me in several respects; but one essential she has denied me entirely; it is that instantaneous perception of fit and unfit, which is so useful in the conduct of life. No one can discriminate more accurately *afterwards* than Clarinda. But when her heart is so expanded by the influence of kindness, she loses all command of it, and often suffers severely in the recollection of her unguardedness. You must have perceived this; but at any rate, I wish you "to know me as I really am." I would have given much for society today; for I can't bear my own: but no human being has come near me. Well as I like you, Sylvander, I would rather lose your love than your esteem: the first I ought not to wish; the other I shall endeavour to maintain. But no more of this: you prohibit it, and I obey.

For many years have I sought for a male friend, endowed with sentiments like yours; one who could love me with tenderness, yet unmixed with selfishness; who could be my friend, companion, protector, and who would die sooner than injure me. I sought—but I sought in vain! Heaven has, I hope, sent me this blessing in my Sylvander! Whatever weakness may cleave to Clarinda, her heart is not to blame: whatever it may have been by nature, it is unsullied by art. If she dare dispose of it—last night can leave you at no loss to guess the man:

> Then, dear Sylvander, use it weel,
> And row it in your bosom's biel;
> Ye 'll find it ay baith kind and leal,
> And fu' o' glee;
> It wad na wrang the vera deil;
> Ah, far less thee!

How do you like this parody on a passage of my favourite poet? It is extempore—from the heart; and let it be *to* the heart. I am to enclose the first fruits of my muse:—

TO A BLACKBIRD SINGING ON A TREE.

MORNINGSIDE, 1784.

> Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
> Thy cheerful notes will hush despair;
> Thy tuneful warblings, void of art,
> Thrill sweetly thro' my aching heart.
> Now choose thy mate and fondly love,
> And all the charming transport prove—
> Those sweet emotions all enjoy,
> Let Love and Song thy hours employ;
> Whilst I, a love-lorn exile, live,
> And rapture nor receive nor give.
> Go on, sweet bird, and soothe my care,
> Thy cheerful notes will hush despair.

It has no poetic merit, but it bespeaks a sweet feminine mind—such a one as I wish mine to be; but my vivacity deprives me of that softness which is, in my opinion, the first female ornament. It was written to soothe an aching heart. I then laboured under a cruel anguish of soul, which I cannot tell you of. If I ever take a walk to the temple of Hymen, I 'll disclose it; but you and I (were it ever possible) would "fall out by the way."

The lines on the soldier were occasioned by reading a book entitled "Sorrows of the Heart." Miss Nimmo was pleased with them, and sent them to the gentleman. They are not poetry, but they speak what I felt at a survey of so much filial tenderness.

I agree with you in liking quotations. If they are apt, they often give one's ideas more pleasantly than our own language can at all times. I am stupid to-night. I have a soreness at my heart. I conclude, therefore

with a verse of Goldsmith, which of late has become an immense favourite of mine;

"In Nature's simplest habit clad,
No wealth nor power had he;
Genius and worth were all he had,
But these were *all* to me."

Good night, "my dear Sylvander," say this (like Werter) to yourself,—Your

CLARINDA.

SUNDAY EVENING.

I would have given much, Sylvander, that you had heard Mr. Kemp this afternoon. You would have heard my principles, and the foundation of all my immortal hopes, elegantly delivered. "Let me live the life of the righteous,* and my latter end be like his," was the text. Who are the righteous? "Those," says Sylvander, "whose minds are actuated and governed by purity, truth, and charity." But where does such a mind exist? "It must be where the soul is made perfect," for I know none such on earth. "The righteous," then, must believe in Christ, and rely on His perfect righteousness for salvation. "Everlasting" life, as you observe, is in the power of all to embrace, and this is eternal life, to "believe in Him whom God hath sent." Purity, truth, and charity will flow from this belief, as naturally as the stream from the fountain. These are indeed the only evidences we can have of the reality of our faith; and they must be produced in a degree ere we can be fit for the enjoyment of Heaven. But where is the man who dare plead these before "Infinite Holiness?" Will inflexible Justice pardon our thousand violations of His laws? Will our imperfect repentance and amendments atone for past guilt? or, will we presume to present our best services (spotted as they are) as worthy of acceptance before unerring Rectitude? I am astonished how any intelligent mind, blessed with a divine revelation, can pause a moment on the subject. "Enter not into judgment with me, O Lord! in Thy sight no flesh can be justified!" This must be the result of every candid mind upon surveying its own deserts. If God had not been pleased to reveal His own Son, as our all-sufficient Saviour, what could we have done but cried for mercy, without any sure hope of obtaining it? But when we have Him clearly announced as our surety, our guide, our blessed advocate with the Father—who, in their senses, ought to hesitate in putting their souls into the hands of this glorious "Prince of Peace?" Without this, we may admire the Creator in His works, but we can never approach Him with the confidential tenderness of children—"I will arise, and go to my Father." This is the blessed language of every one who believes and trusts in Jesus. Oh, Sylvander, who would go on fighting with themselves, resolving and re-resolving, while they can thus fly to their Father's house? But alas! it is not till we tire of these husks of our own, that we recollect that *there*, there is bread enough, and to spare. Whenever the wish is sincerely formed in our hearts, our Heavenly Father will have compassion upon us "though a great way off." This is the "religion of the bosom." I BELIEVE that there will be many of every sect, nation, and people, who will "stand before the throne;" but I believe that it will be the effect of Christ's atonement, conveyed to them by ways too complicated for our finite minds to comprehend. But why should we who know "the way, the truth, and the life" deprive ourselves of the comfort it is fitted to yield? Let my earnest wish for your eternal as well as temporal happiness, excuse the warmth with which I have unfolded what has been my own fixed point of rest. I want no controversy—I hate it; let our only strivings be, who shall be the most constant and attached friend, which of us shall render our conduct most approved to the other. I am well aware how vain it were (vain in every sense of the expression) to hope to sway a mind so intelligent as yours, by any argument I could devise. May that God, who spoke worlds into existence, open your eyes to see "the truth, as it is in Jesus!" Forgive me, Sylvander, if I 've been tedious upon my favourite theme. You know who it was, who could not stop "when his divinity came across him." Even there you see we are congenial.

I 'll tell you a pretty apt quotation I made to-day, warm from my heart. I met the Judges in the morning, as I went into the Parliament Square, among whom was Lord Dreghorn,† in his new robes of purple. He is my mother's cousin-german, the greatest real honour he could ever claim; but used me in a manner unfeeling, harsh beyond description, at one of the darkest periods of my chequered life. I looked steadfastly in his sour face; his eye met mine. I was a female, and therefore he stared; but, when he knew who it was, he averted his eyes suddenly. Instantaneously these lines darted into my mind:

"Would you the purple should your limbs adorn,
Go, wash the conscious blemish with a tear."

The man, who enjoys more pleasure in the mercenary embrace of a courtezan, than in relieving the unfortunate, is a detestable character, whatever his bright talents be.

I pity him! Sylvander, all his fortune could not purchase half the luxury of Friday night. Let us be grateful to Heaven, though it has denied us wealth and power, for being endowed with feelings, fitted to yield the most

* Whatever attention Clarinda paid to the sermon, she had evidently given little to the text, which, it need hardly be said, correctly runs, "Let me *die the death* of the righteous," &c.

† A son of Colin M'Laurin, the well-known mathematician, who was a grand-uncle of Clarinda.

exquisite enjoyments here and hereafter! May I hope you'll read what I have urged on religion, with attention, Sylvander, when Reason resumes her reign? I've none of those future delusive hopes which you too vainly express as having towards Clarinda. Do not indulge them; my wishes extend to your immortal welfare. Let your first care be to please God: for that which He delights in must be happiness. I must conclude, or I'll relapse. I have not a grain of humour to-night in my composition; so, lest "charming Clarinda" should make you yawn, she'll decently say "good night!"

I laugh to myself at the recollection of your earnest asseverations as to your being anti-Platonic! Want of passions is not merit: strong ones under the control of reason and religion—let these be our glory.—Once more good night.

CLARINDA.

No. XVI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

SUNDAY NIGHT, *January* 20, 1788.

THE impertinence of fools has joined with a return of an old indisposition to make me good for nothing to-day. The paper has lain before me all this evening to write to my dear Clarinda; but—

"Fools rushed on fools, as waves succeed to waves."

I cursed them in my soul: they sacrilegiously disturbed my meditations on her who holds my heart! What a creature is man! A little alarm last night and to-day that I am mortal, has made such a revolution in my spirits! There is no philosophy, no divinity, comes half so home to the mind. I have no idea of courage that braves Heaven. 'Tis the wild ravings of an imaginary hero in Bedlam. I can no more, Clarinda; I can scarcely hold up my head; but I am happy you don't know it, you would be so uneasy.

SYLVANDER.

MONDAY MORNING.

I am, my lovely friend, much better this morning, on the whole; but I have a horrid languor on my spirits—

"Sick of the world and all its joy,
My soul in pining sadness mourns;
Dark scenes of woe my mind employ,
The past and present in their turns."

Have you ever met with a saying of the great and likewise good Mr. Locke, author of the famous Essay on the Human Understanding? He wrote a letter to a friend, directing it "Not to be delivered till after my decease." It ended thus—"I know you loved me when living, and will preserve my memory now I am dead. All the use to be made of it is—that this life affords no solid satisfaction, but in the consciousness of having done well, and the hopes of another life. Adieu! I leave my best wishes with you.—J. LOCKE."

Clarinda, may I reckon on your friendship for life? I think I may. Thou Almighty Preserver of men! Thy friendship, which hitherto I have too much neglected, to secure it shall all the future days and nights of my life be my steady care! The idea of my Clarinda follows:—

"Hide it, my heart, within that close disguise,
Where, mixed with God's, her loved idea lies."

But I fear inconstancy, the consequent imperfection of human weakness. Shall I meet with a friendship that defies years of absence, and the chances and changes of fortune? Perhaps "such things are." One honest man I have great hopes from that way: but who, except a romance writer, would think on a *love* that could promise for life, in spite of distance, absence, chance, and change; and that, too, with slender hopes of fruition?

For my own part, I can say to myself in both requisitions, "Thou art the man!" I dare, in cool resolve, I dare declare myself that friend and that lover. If womankind is capable of such things, Clarinda is. I trust that she is; and feel I shall be miserable if she is not. There is not one virtue which gives worth, or one sentiment which does honour to the sex, that she does not possess superior to any woman I ever saw: her exalted mind, aided a little perhaps by her situation, is, I think, capable of that nobly romantic love-enthusiasm. May I see you on Wednesday evening, my dear angel? The next Wednesday again will, I conjecture, be a hated day to us both. I tremble for censorious remarks for your sake; but in extraordinary cases, may not usual and useful precaution be a little dispensed with? Three evenings, three swift-winged evenings, with pinions of down, are all the past—I dare not calculate the future. I shall call at Miss Nimmo's to-morrow evening; 'twill be a farewell call.

I have wrote out my last sheet of paper, so I am reduced to my last half-sheet. What a strange, mysterious faculty is that thing called imagination! We have no ideas almost at all of another world; but I have often amused myself with visionary schemes of what happiness might be enjoyed by small alterations—alterations that we can fully enter to, in this present state of existence. For instance, suppose you and I just as we are at present, the same reasoning powers, sentiments, and even desires; the same fond curiosity for knowledge and remarking observation in our minds; and imagine our bodies free from pain, and the necessary supplies for the wants of

nature at all times and easily within our reach; imagine farther, that we were set free from the laws of gravitation which bind us to this globe, and could at pleasure fly, without inconvenience, through all the yet unconjectured bounds of creation—what a life of bliss should we lead in our mutual pursuit of virtue and knowledge, and our mutual enjoyment of friendship and love!

I see you laughing at my fairy fancies, and calling me a voluptuous Mahometan; but I am certain I would be a happy creature, beyond anything we call bliss here below: nay, it would be a paradise congenial to you too. Don't you see us hand in hand, or rather my arm about your lovely waist, making our remarks on Sirius, the nearest of the fixed stars, or surveying a comet, flaming innoxious by us, as we just now would mark the passing pomp of a travelling monarch; or in a shady bower of Mercury or Venus, dedicating the hour to love, in mutual converse, relying honour, and revelling endearment—whilst the most exalted strains of poesy and harmony would be the ready, spontaneous language of our souls! Devotion is the favourite employment of your heart, so it is of mine: what incentives then to, and powers for reverence, gratitude, faith, and hope, in all the fervours of adoration and praise to that Being whose unsearchable wisdom, power, and goodness, so pervaded, so inspired every sense and feeling! By this time, I dare say, you will be blessing the neglect of the maid that leaves me destitute of paper.

SYLVANDER.

No. XVII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

January, 21, 1788.

. . . I AM a discontented ghost, a perturbed spirit. Clarinda, if ever you forget Sylvander, may you be happy, but he will be miserable.

O, what a fool I am in love! what an extraordinary prodigal of affection! Why are your sex called the tender sex, when I never have met with one who can repay me in passion? They are either not so rich in love as I am, or they are niggards where I am lavish.

O Thou, whose I am, and whose are all my ways! Thou see'st me here, the hapless wreck of tides and tempests in my own bosom: do Thou direct to Thyself that ardent love, for which I have so often sought a return, in vain, from my fellow-creatures! If Thy goodness has yet such a gift in store for me, as an equal return of affection from her who, Thou knowest, is dearer to me than life, do Thou bless and hallow our bond of love and friendship; watch over us, in all our outgoings and incomings, for good; and may the tie that unites our hearts be strong and indissoluble as the thread of man's immortal life!

I am just going to take your Blackbird, the sweetest, I am sure, that ever sung, and prune its wings a little.

SYLVANDER.

No. XVIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

THURSDAY MORNING, *Jan.* 24, 1788.

"Unlavish Wisdom never works in vain."

I HAVE been tasking my reason, Clarinda, why a woman, who, for native genius, poignant wit, strength of mind, generous sincerity of soul, and the sweetest female tenderness, is without a peer; and whose personal charms have few, very few, parallels among her sex; why or how she should fall to the blessed lot of a poor harum-scarum poet, whom Fortune had kept for her particular use, to wreak her temper on whenever she was in ill-humour.

One time I conjectured, that as Fortune is the most capricious jade ever known, she may have taken, not a fit of remorse, but a paroxysm of whim, to raise the poor devil out of the mire, where he had so often and so conveniently served her as a stepping-stone, and given him the most glorious boon she ever had in her gift, merely for the maggot's sake, to see how his fool head and his fool heart will bear it.

At other times, I was vain enough to think that Nature, who has a great deal to say with Fortune, had given the coquettish goddess some such hint as—"Here is a paragon of female excellence, whose equal, in all my former compositions, I never was lucky enough to hit on, and despair of ever doing so again: you have cast her rather in the shades of life. There is a certain poet of my making: among your frolics, it would not be amiss to attach him to this masterpiece of my hand, to give her that immortality among mankind, which no woman of any age ever more deserved, and which few rhymsters of this age are better able to confer."

EVENING, NINE O'CLOCK.

I am here—absolutely unfit to finish my letter—pretty hearty, after a bowl which has been constantly plied since dinner till this moment. I have been with Mr. Schetki,

the musician, and he has set the song finely.* I have no distinct ideas of anything, but that I have drunk your health twice to-night, and that you are all my soul holds dear in this world.

SYLVANDER.

No. XIII.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

THURSDAY FORENOON, *Jan.* 24, 1788.

SYLVANDER, the moment I waked this morning, I received a summons from Conscience to appear at the Bar of Reason. While I trembled before this sacred throne, I beheld a succession of figures pass before me in awful brightness! Religion, clad in a robe of light, stalked majestically along, her hair dishevelled, and in her hand the Scriptures of Truth, held open at these words—"If you love me, keep my commandments." Reputation followed; her eyes darted indignation, while she waved a beautiful wreath of laurel, intermixed with flowers gathered by Modesty in the Bower of Peace. Consideration held her bright mirror close to my eyes, and made me start at my own image! Love alone appeared as counsel in my behalf. She was adorned with a veil, borrowed from Friendship, which hid her defects, and set off her beauties to advantage. She had no plea to offer, but that of being the sister of Friendship, and the offspring of Charity. But Reason refused to listen to her defence, because she brought no certificate from the Temple of Hymen! While I trembled before her, Reason addressed me in the following manner:—"Return to my paths, which alone are peace; shut your heart against the fascinating intrusion of the passions; take Consideration for your guide, and you will soon arrive at the Bower of Tranquillity."

Sylvander, to drop my metaphor, I am neither well nor happy to-day: my heart reproaches me for last night. If you wish Clarinda to regain her peace, determine against everything but what the strictest delicacy warrants.

I do not blame you, but myself. I must not see you on Saturday, unless I find I can depend on myself acting otherwise. Delicacy, you know, it was which won me to you at once: take care you do not loosen the dearest, most sacred tie that unites us? Remember Clarinda's present and eternal happiness depends upon her adherence to Virtue. Happy Sylvander! that can be attached to Heaven and Clarinda together. Alas! I feel I cannot serve two masters. God pity me!!

* 'Clarinda, mistress of my soul" &c., vol. i. p. 134.

THURSDAY NIGHT.

Why have I not heard from you Sylvander? Everything in nature seems tinged with gloom to-day. Ah! Sylvander—

> "The heart 's aye the part aye
> That maks us right or wrang!"

How forcibly have these lines recurred to my thoughts! Did I not tell you what a wretch love rendered me? Affection to the strongest height I am capable of, to a man of Sylvander's merit, if it did not lead me into weaknesses and follies my heart utterly condemns. I am convinced that without the approbation of Heaven and my own mind, existence would be to me a heavy curse. Sylvander, why do not your Clarinda's repeated levities cure the too passionate fondness you express for her? Perhaps it has a little removed esteem. But I dare not touch this string; it would fill up the cup of my present misery. O Sylvander, may the friendship of that God you and I have too much neglected to secure, be henceforth our chief study and delight. I cannot live deprived of the consciousness of this favour. I feel something of this awful state all this day. Nay, while I approached God with my lips, my heart was not fully there.

Mr. Locke's posthumous letter ought to be written in letters of gold. What heartfelt joy does the consciousness of having done well in any one instance confer; and what agony the reverse! Do not be displeased when I tell you I wish our parting was over. At a distance we shall retain the same heartfelt affection and interestedness in each other's concerns; but absence will mellow and restrain those violent heart-agitations which, if continued much longer, would unhinge my very soul, and render me unfit for the duties of life.

You and I are capable of that ardency of love for which the wide creation cannot afford an adequate object. Let us seek to repose it in the bosom of our God. Let us next give a place to those dearest on earth—the tender charities of parent, sister, child! I bid you good-night with this short prayer of Thomson's—

> "Father of Light and Life, thou good Supreme!
> Oh teach us what is good—teach us Thyself!
> Save us from folly, vanity, and vice," &c.

Your letter—I should have liked had it contained a little of the last one's seriousness. Bless me! you must not flatter so; but it 's in a "merry mood," and I make allowances. Part of some of your encomiums, I know I deserve; but you are far out when you enumerate "strength of mind" among them. I have not even an ordinary share of it—every passion does what it will with me; and all my life, I have been guided by the impulse of the moment—unsteady, and weak! I thank you for the letter, though it sticket my prayer. Why did you

tell me you drank away Reason, "that Heaven-lighted lamp in man?" When Sylvander utters a calm, sober sentiment, he is never half so charming. I have read several of these in your last letter with vast pleasure. Good night!

FRIDAY MORNING.

My servant (who is a good soul) will deliver you this. She is going down to Leith, and will return about two or three o'clock. I have ordered her to call then, in case you have ought to say to Clarinda to-day. I am better of that sickness at heart I had yesterday; but there 's a sting remains, which will not be removed till I am at peace with Heaven and myself. Another interview, spent as we ought, will help to procure this. A day when the sun shines gloriously always makes me devout! I hope 'tis an earnest (to-day) of being soon restored to the "light of His countenance," who is the source of love and standard of perfection. Adieu!

CLARINDA.

No. XIX.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

FRIDAY, *January* 25, 1788.

CLARINDA, my life, you have wounded my soul. Can I think of your being unhappy, even though it be not described in your pathetic elegance of language, without being miserable? Clarinda, can I bear to be told from you that "you will not see me to-morrow night—that you wish the hour of parting were come?" Do not let us impose on ourselves by sounds. If, in the moment of fond endearment and tender dalliance, I perhaps trespassed against the *letter* of Decorum's law, I appeal, even to you, whether I ever sinned, in the very least degree, against the *spirit* of her strictest statute? But why, my love, talk to me in such strong terms; every word of which cuts me to the very soul? You know, a hint, the slightest signification of your wish, is to me a sacred command.

Be reconciled, my angel, to your God, yourself, and me; and I pledge you Sylvander's honour—an oath, I dare say, you will trust without reserve—that you shall never more have reason to complain of his conduct. Nay, my love, do not wound our next meeting with any averted looks or restrained caresses. I have marked the line of conduct—a line, I know, exactly to your taste—and which I will inviolably keep; but do not you shew the least inclination to make boundaries. Seeming distrust, where you know you may confide, is a cruel sin against sensibility.

"Delicacy, you know, it was which won me to you at once: take care you do not loosen the dearest, most sacred tie that unites us." Clarinda, I would not have stung *your* soul, I would not have bruised *your* spirit, as that harsh, crucifying "Take care," did *mine;* no, not to have gained heaven! Let me again appeal to your dear self, if Sylvander, even when he seemingly half transgressed the laws of decorum, if he did not shew more chastened, trembling, faltering delicacy, than the many of the world do in keeping these laws?

O Love and Sensibility, ye have conspired against my Peace! I love to madness, and I feel to torture! Clarinda, how can I forgive myself, that I have ever touched a single chord in your bosom with pain! Would I do it willingly? Would any consideration, any gratification, make me do so? Oh, did you love like me, you would not, you could not, deny or put off a meeting with the man who adores you; who would die a thousand deaths before he would injure you; and who must soon bid you a long farewell!

I had proposed bringing my bosom-friend, Mr. Ainslie, to-morrow evening, at his strong request, to see you; as he has only time to stay with us about ten minutes, for an engagement. But I shall hear from you: this afternoon, for mercy's sake! for, till I hear from you, I am wretched. Oh Clarinda, the tie that binds me to thee is intwisted—incorporated with my dearest threads of life!

SYLVANDER.

No. XX.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

SATURDAY, *January* 26, 1788.

I WAS on the way, *my Love*, to meet you (I never do things by halves) when I got your card. Mr. Ainslie goes out of town to-morrow morning to see a brother of his, who is newly arrived from France. I am determined that he and I shall call on you together. So look you, lest I should never see to-morrow, we will call on you to-night. Mary and you may put off tea till about seven, at which time, in the Galloway phrase, "an the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale," expect the humblest of your humble servants, and his dearest friend. We pro-

pose staying only half an hour "for ought we ken." I could suffer the lash of misery eleven months in the year, were the twelfth to be composed of hours like yesternight. You are the soul of my enjoyment—all else is of the stuff of stocks and stones!

SYLVANDER.

No. XXI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

SUNDAY, *January* 27, 1788.

I HAVE almost given up the Excise idea. I have been just now to wait on a great person, Miss ——'s friend, ——. Why will great people not only deafen us with the din of their equipage, and dazzle us with their fastidious pomp, but they must also be so very dictatorially wise? I have been questioned like a child about my matters, and blamed and schooled for my inscription on Stirling window. Come, Clarinda! "Come, curse me Jacob; come, defy me Israel!"

SUNDAY NIGHT.

I have been with Miss Nimmo. She is indeed "a good soul," as my Clarinda finely says. She has reconciled me, in a good measure, to the world with her friendly prattle.

Schetki has sent me the song, set to a fine air of his composing. I have called the song "Clarinda:" I have carried it about in my pocket, and hummed it over all day.

MONDAY MORNING.

If my prayers have any weight in heaven, this morning looks in on you and finds you in the arms of peace, except where it is charmingly interrupted by the ardours of devotion. I find so much serenity of mind, so much positive pleasure, so much fearless daring toward the world, when I warm in devotion, or feel the glorious sensation—a consciousness of Almighty friendship—that I am sure I shall soon be an honest enthusiast.

"How are thy servants blest, O Lord!
How sure is their defence!
Eternal Wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence!"

I am, my dear Madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

No. XIV.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

SUNDAY, 8 EVENING, 27*th January*, 1788.

SYLVANDER, when I think of you as my *dearest* and most attached *friend*, I am highly pleased; but when you come across my mind as my *lover*, something within gives a *sting* resembling that of guilt! Tell me why is this? It must be from the idea that I am another's. What? another's wife! O cruel Fate! I am indeed bound in an "iron chain!" Forgive me, if this should give you pain. You know I must (I told you I *must*) tell you my genuine feelings, or be silent. Last night we were happy! beyond what the bulk of mankind can conceive! Perhaps the "line" you had marked was a *little* infringed—it was really; but, though I *disapprove*, I have not been *unhappy* about it. I am convinced no less of your *discernment* than of your *wish* to make your Clarinda happy. I know you *sincere*, when you profess horror at the idea of what would render her miserable forever. But we must *guard* against going to the *verge* of danger. Ah! my friend, much need had we to "watch and pray!" May these benevolent spirits whose office it is to "save the fall of Virtue, struggling on the brink of vice," be ever present to protect and guide us in right paths!

I had an hour's conversation to-day with my worthy friend Mr. K——p.* You 'll attribute, perhaps to *this*, the above sentiments. 'Tis true, there 's not one on earth has so much influence on me, except Sylvander; *partly* it has forced me to "feel along the mental intelligence." However, I 've broke the ice. I confessed I had conceived a tender impression of late—that it was mutual, and that I had wished to unbosom myself to him (as I did), particularly to ask if he thought I should, or not, mention it to my *friend?*† I saw he felt for me (for I was in tears); but he bewailed that I had given my *heart*, while in my present state of bondage—wished I had made it friendship *only*—in short, talked to me in the style of a tender Parent, *anxious* for my happiness. He disapproves altogether of my saying a syllable of the matter to my friend; says it could only make him uneasy; and that I 'm in no way bound to do it by any one tie. This has eased me of a *load* which has lain upon my mind ever since our intimacy. Sylvander, I wish you and Mr. K—— p were acquainted—such worth and sensibility! If you had his piety and sobriety of manners, united to the shining abilities you possess, you 'd be "a faultless monster which the world ne'er saw." He too has great talents. His imagination is rich, his feelings delicate, his discernment acute; yet there are *shades* in his, as in all

* The Rev. John Kemp, minister of Tolbooth parish church.

† Lord Craig, her cousin, who in various ways had befriended her.

characters: but these it would ill become Clarinda to point out. Alas! I know too many blots in my own!

Sylvander, I believe nothing were a more impracticable task than to make you feel a little of genuine Gospel *humility!* Believe me, I wish not to see you deprived of that noble fire of an exalted mind which you eminently possess. Yet a sense of your faults—a *feeling* sense of them! were devoutly to be wished. Tell me, did you ever, or how oft have you smote on your breast, and cried "God be merciful to me a sinner?" I fancy, once or twice, when suffering from the effects of your errors. Pardon me if I be hurting your "intrinsic dignity;" it need not—even "divine Clarinda" has been in this *mortal* predicament.

Pray, what does Mr. Ainslie think of her! was he not astonished to find her merely human? Three weeks ago, I suppose you would have walked into her presence *unshod;* but one must *bury* even divinities when they discover symptoms of mortality! (Let *these* be interred in Sylvander's bosom!)

My dearest friend, there are two wishes uppermost in my heart; to see you think alike with Clarinda on religion; and to see you settled in some creditable line of business. The warm interest I take in both these is perhaps the best proof of the sincerity of my friendship, as well as the earnest of its duration. As to the first, I devolve it over into the hands of the Omniscient! May He raise up friends who will effectuate the other! While I breathe these fervent wishes, think not that anything but pure *disinterested* regard prompts them. They're fond, but chimerical ideas. They are never indulged but in the hour of tender endearment, when

> "Innocence
> Looks gaily smiling on; while rosy Pleasure
> Hides young Desire amid her flowery wreath,
> And pours her cup luxuriant, mantling high
> The sparkling heavenly vintage—Love and Bliss!"

'Tis past ten; and I please myself with thinking Sylvander will be about to retire, and write to Clarinda. I fancy you 'll find this *stupid* enough; but I can't be always bright; the *sun* will be *sometimes* under a cloud. Sylvander, I wish our kind feelings were more moderate; why set one's heart upon *impossibilities?* Try me merely as your friend (alas! all I ought to be): believe me, you 'll find me most rational. If you 'd caress the "mental intelligence" as you do the corporeal frame, indeed, Sylvander, you 'd make me a philosopher. I see you fidgetting at this *violently* blasting rationality. I have a headache which brings home those things to the mind. To-morrow I 'll hear from you, I hope! This is Sunday, and not a word on our favourite subject. O fy! "divine Clarinda." I intend giving you *my* idea of Heaven in opposition to your heathenish description (which, by the by, was elegantly drawn). Mine shall be founded on Reason and supported by Scripture; but it 's too late; my head aches, but my heart is affectionately yours.

MONDAY MORNING.

I am not sorry almost at the Excise affair misgiving. You will be better out of Edinburgh: it is full of temptation to one of your social turn. Providence (if you be wise in future) will order something better for you. I 'm half-glad you were schooled about the Inscription; 'twill be a lesson, I hope, in future. Clarinda would have lectured you on it before, "if she durst." Miss N. is a woman after my own heart. You are reconciled to the world by her "friendly prattle!" How can you talk so diminutively of the conversation of a woman of solid sense? what will you say of Clarinda's chit chat? I suppose you will give it a still more insignificant term if you durst; but it is mixed with *something* that makes it more bearable, were it even weaker than it is. Miss N. is right in both her conjectures. Ah, Sylvander! my peace *must* suffer; yours cannot. *You* think, in loving Clarinda, you are doing right; all Sylvander's eloquence cannot convince me that it is so! If I were but at liberty—Oh how I would indulge in all the luxury of *innocent* love! It is, I fear, I fear, too late to talk in this strain after indulging you and myself so much; but would Sylvander shelter his Love in Friendship's *allowed* garb, Clarinda would be much happier!

"To-morrow," did'st thou say? The time is short *now;* is it not *too* frequent? Do not sweetest dainties cloy soonest? Take your chance—come half-past eight. If anything particular occur to render it improper *to-morrow*, I 'll send you word, and name another evening. Mr. Kemp is to call to-night, I believe. *He* too "trembles for my peace." Two such worthies to be interested about my foolish ladyship! The Apostle Paul, with all his rhetoric, would not reconcile me to the *great* (little souls) when I think of them and Sylvander together; but I *pity* them.

> "If e'er ambition did my fancy cheat,
> With any wish so *mean*, as to be great
> Continue, Heaven, far from me to remove
> The humble blessings of that life I 'd love."

Till we meet, my dear Sylvander, adieu!

CLARINDA.

No. XXII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

TUESDAY MORNING, 29*th January*, 1788.

I CANNOT go out to-day, my dearest love, without sending you half a line by way of a sin-offering; but, believe me

'twas the sin of ignorance. Could you think that I *intended* to hurt you by anything I said yesternight? Nature has been too kind to you for your happiness, your delicacy, your sensibility. Oh why should such glorious qualifications be the fruitful source of woe! You have "murdered sleep" to me last night. I went to bed impressed with an idea that you were unhappy; and every start I closed my eyes, busy Fancy painted you in such scenes of romantic misery, that I would almost be persuaded you are not well this morning.

> "If I unwitting have offended,
> Impute it not, ...
> But while we live
> But one short hour, perhaps, between us two
> Let there be peace."

If Mary is not gone by the time this reaches you, give her my best compliments. She is a charming girl, and highly worthy of the noblest love.

I send you a poem to read till I call on you this night, which will be about nine. I wish I could procure some potent spell, some fairy charm, that would protect from injury, or restore to rest that bosom chord, "trembling alive all o'er," on which hangs your peace of mind. I thought, vainly I fear I thought, that the devotion of love, love strong as even you can feel, love guarded, invulnerably guarded by all the purity of virtue, and all the pride of honour—I thought such a love might make you happy. Shall I be mistaken? I can no more, for hurry.

SYLVANDER.

No. XV.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

THURSDAY, NOON, *Jan.* 31, 1788.

I HAVE been giving Mary a convoy; the day is a genial one. Mary is a happy woman to-day. Mrs. Cockburn has seen her "Henry," and admired it vastly. She talked of you, told her she saw you, and that her lines even met your applause. Sylvander, I share in the joy of every one; and am ready to "weep with those who weep," as well as "rejoice with those who rejoice." I wish all the human race well, my heart throbs with the large ambitious wish to see them blest; yet I seem sometimes as if born to inflict misery. What a cordial evening we had last night! I only tremble at the ardent manner Mary talks of Sylvander! She knows where his affections lie, and is quite unconscious of the eagerness of her expressions. All night I could get no sleep for her admiration. I like her for it, and am proud of it; but I know how much violent admiration is akin to love.

I go out to dinner, and mean to leave this, in case of one from you to-day. Miss Chalmers's letters are charming. Why did not such a woman secure your heart? O the caprice of human nature! to fix on impossibilities.

I am, however, happy you have such valuable friends. What a pity that those who will be most apt to feel your merit, will be probably among the number who have not the power of serving you! Sylvander, I never was ambitious; but of late I have wished for wealth, with an ardour unfelt before, to be able to say, "Be independent, thou dear friend of my heart!" What exquisite joy! Then "your head would be lifted up above your enemies." Oh, then, what little shuffling, sneaking attentions! Shame upon the world! Wealth and power command its adulation, while real genius and worth, without these, are neglected and contemned.

> "In nature's simplest habit clad,
> No wealth nor power had he;
> Genius and worth were all he had,
> And these were all to me."

Forgive my quoting my most favourite lines. You spoke of being here to-morrow evening. I believe you would be the first to tire of our society; but I tremble for censorious remarks: however, we must be sober in our hours. I am flat to-day—so adieu! I was not so cheerful last night as I wished. Forgive me. I am yours,

CLARINDA.

No. XXIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

FRIDAY MORNING, 7 O'CLOCK, *Feb.* 1, 1788.

YOUR fears for Mary are truly laughable. I suppose, my love, you and I showed her a scene which, perhaps, made her wish that she had a swain, and one who could love like me; and 'tis a thousand pities that so good a heart as hers should want an aim, an object. I am miserably stupid this morning. Yesterday I dined with a Baronet, and sat pretty late over the bottle. And "who hath woe; who hath sorrow? they that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." Forgive me, likewise, a quotation from my favourite author. Solomon's know-

ledge of the world is very great. He may be looked on as the "Spectator" or "Adventurer" of his day: and it is, indeed, surprising what a sameness has ever been in human nature. The broken, but strongly characterizing hints, that the royal author gives us of the manners of the court of Jerusalem and country of Israel are, in their great outlines, the same pictures that London and England, Versailles and France, exhibit some three thousand years later. The loves in the "Song of Songs" are all in the spirit of Lady M. W. Montague, or Madame Ninon de l'Enclos; though, for my part, I dislike both the ancient and modern voluptuaries; and will dare to affirm, that such an attachment as mine to Clarinda, and such evenings as she and I have spent, are what these greatly respectable and deeply experienced Judges of Life and Love never dreamed of.

I shall be with you this evening between eight and nine, and shall keep as sober hours as you could wish. I am ever, my dear Madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

No. XXIV.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Sunday Morning, *Feb.* 3, 1788.

I have just been before the throne of my God, Clarinda. According to my association of ideas, my sentiments of love and friendship, I next devote myself to you. Yesternight I was happy—happiness "that the world cannot give." I kindle at the recollection; but it is a flame where "Innocence looks smiling on," and Honour stands by, a sacred guard. Your heart, your fondest wishes, your dearest thoughts, these are yours to bestow: your person is unapproachable, by the laws of your country; and he loves not as I do who would make you miserable.

You are an angel, Clarinda: you are surely no mortal that "the earth owns." To kiss your hand, to live on your smile, is to me far more exquisite bliss than any the dearest favours that the fairest of the sex, yourself excepted, can bestow.

Sunday Evening.

You are the constant companion of my thoughts. How wretched is the condition of one who is haunted with conscious guilt, and trembling under the idea of dreaded vengeance! And what a placid calm, what a charming secret enjoyment is given to one's bosom by the kind feelings of friendship, and the fond throes of love! Out upon the tempest of Anger, the acrimonious gall of fretful Impatience, the sullen frost of lowering Resentment, or the corroding poison of withered Envy! They eat up the immortal part of man! If they spent their fury only on the unfortunate objects of them, it would be something in their favour; but these miserable passions, like traitor Iscariot, betray their lord and master.

Thou Almighty Author of peace, and goodness and love! do Thou give me the social heart that kindly tastes of every man's cup! Is it a draught of joy? warm and open my heart to share it with cordial, unenvying rejoicing! Is it the bitter potion of sorrow? melt my heart with sincerely sympathetic woe! Above all, do Thou give me the manly mind, that resolutely exemplifies in life and manners those sentiments which I would wish to be thought to possess! The friend of my soul—there may I never deviate from the firmest fidelity, and most active kindness! Clarinda, the dear object of my fondest love; there, may the most sacred, inviolate honour, the most faithful, kindling constancy, ever watch and animate my every thought and imagination!

Did you ever meet with the following lines spoken of Religion, your darling topic?

> "'Tis *this*, my friend, that streaks our morning bright;
> 'Tis *this* that gilds the horror of our night!
> When wealth forsakes us, and when friends are few,
> When friends are faithless, or when foes pursue;
> 'Tis this that wards the blow, or stills the smart,
> Disarms Affliction, or repels its dart;
> Within the breast bids purest rapture rise,
> Bids smiling Conscience spread her cloudless skies."

I met with these verses very early in life, and was so delighted with them that I have them by me, copied at school.

Good night, and sound rest, my dearest Clarinda!

SYLVANDER.

No. XVI.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

Wednesday Evening, *Nine, Feb.* 6, 1788.

There is not a sentiment in your last dear letter but must meet the approbation of every worthy discerning mind—except one, "that my heart, my fondest wishes are mine to bestow." True they are not, they cannot be, placed upon him who ought to have had them, but whose conduct (I dare not say more against him) has justly

forfeited them. But is it not too near an infringement of the sacred obligations of marriage to bestow one's heart, wishes, and thoughts upon another? Something in my soul whispers that it approaches criminality. I obey the voice. Let me cast every kind feeling into the allowed bond of Friendship. If 'tis accompanied with a shadow of a softer feeling, it shall be poured into the bosom of a merciful God! If a confession of my warmest, tenderest friendship does not satisfy you, duty forbids Clarinda should do more! Sylvander, I never expect to be happy here below! Why was I formed so susceptible of emotions I dare not indulge? Never were there two hearts formed so exactly alike as ours! No wonder our friendship is heightened by the "sympathetic glow." In reading your Life, I find the very first poems that hit your fancy, were those that first engaged mine. While almost a child, the hymn you mentioned, and another of Addison's, "When all thy mercies," &c., were my chief favourites. They are much so to this hour: and I make my boys repeat them every Sabbath day. When about fifteen, I took a great fondness for Pope's "Messiah," which I still reckon one of the sublimest pieces I ever met with.

Sylvander, I believe our friendship will be lasting; its basis has been virtue, similarity of tastes, feelings, and sentiments. Alas! I shudder at the idea of one hundred miles distance. You 'll hardly write me once a month, and other objects will weaken your affection for Clarinda! Yet I cannot believe so. Oh, let the scenes of Nature remind you of Clarinda! In Winter, remember the dark shades of her fate; in Summer, the warmth, the cordial warmth of her friendship; in Autumn, her glowing wishes to bestow plenty on all; and let Spring animate you with hopes, that your friend may live to surmount the wintry blasts of life, and revive to taste a springtime of happiness! At all events, Sylvander, the storms of life "will quickly pass, and one unbounded Spring encircle all." There, Sylvander, I trust we 'll meet. Love *there* is not a crime. I charge you to meet me there. O God! I must lay down my pen.

I repent, almost, flattering your writing talents so much: I can see you know all the merit you possess. The allusion of "the key" is true;* therefore I won't recant it; but I rather was too humble about my own letters, I have met with several who wrote worse than myself, and few, of my own sex, better; so I don't give you great credit for being fashed with them.

Sylvander, I have things with different friends I can't tell to another, yet am not hurt; but I told you of that particular friend: he was, for near four years, the one I confided in. He is very worthy, and answers your description in the "Epistle to J. S." exactly. When I had hardly a friend to care for me in Edinburgh, he befriended me. I saw, too soon, 'twas with him a warmer feeling: perhaps a little infection was the natural effect. I told you the circumstance which helped to eradicate the tender impression in me; but I perceive (though he never tells me so) I see it in every instance, *his* prepossession still remains. I esteem him as a faithful friend; but I can never feel more for him. I fear he 's not convinced of that. He sees no man with me half so often as himself, and thinks I surely am at least partial to no other. I cannot bear to deceive one in so tender a point, and am hurt at his harbouring an attachment I can never return. I have thoughts of owning my intimacy with Sylvander, but a thousand things forbid it. I should be tortured with Jealousy, that "green-eyed monster;" and besides I fear 'twould wound his peace. 'Tis a delicate affair. I wish your judgment on it. O Sylvander, I cannot bear to give pain to any creature, far less to one who pays me the attention of a brother!

I never met with a man congenial, perfectly congenial to myself, but *one*—ask no questions. Is Friday to be the last night? I wish, Sylvander, you 'd steal away—I cannot bear farewell! I can hardly relish the idea of meeting—for the idea! but we will meet again, at least in Heaven, I hope. Sylvander, when I survey myself, my returning weaknesses, I am consoled that my hopes, my immortal hopes, are founded in the complete righteousness of a compassionate Saviour. "In all our afflictions He is afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence guards us."

I am charmed with the lines on Religion, and with you for relishing them. I only wish the world saw you as you appear in your letters to me. Why did you send forth to them the "Holy Fair," &c.? Had Clarinda known you, she would have held you in her arms till she had your promise to suppress them. Do not publish the "Moor-hen:" do not for your sake, and for mine. I wish you vastly to hear my valued friend, Mr. Kemp. Come to hear him on Sunday afternoon. 'Tis the first favour I have asked you: I expect you will not refuse me. You 'll easily get a seat. Your favourite, Mr. Gould, I admired much. His composition is elegant indeed; but 'tis like beholding a beautiful superstructure built on a sandy foundation: 'tis fine to look upon; but one dares not abide in it with safety. Mr. Kemp's language is very good—perhaps not such studied periods as Mr. G.'s; but he is far more animated. He is pathetic in a degree that touches one's soul! and then, 'tis all built upon a rock.

I could chide you for the Parting Song.† You "may reca'," by being wise in future, "your friend as yet." I will be your friend for ever! Good night! God bless you! prays

CLARINDA.

* See Clarinda's Letters of 16th and 19th January.

† "Clarinda, mistress of my soul," &c. See vol. i. p. 134.

THURSDAY, NOON.

I shall go to-morrow forenoon to Miers alone: 'tis quite a usual thing I hear. Mary is not in town, and I don't care to ask Miss Nimmo, or any body else. What size do you want it about? O Sylvander, if you wish my peace, let *Friendship* be the word between us: I tremble at more. "Talk not of Love," &c. To-morrow I 'll expect you. Adieu!

CLARINDA.

No. XXV.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

THURSDAY NIGHT, *Feb.* 7, 1788.

I CANNOT be easy, my Clarinda, while any sentiment respecting me in your bosom gives you pain. If there is no man on earth to whom your heart and affections are justly due, it may savour of imprudence, but never of criminality, to bestow that heart and those affections where you please. The God of love meant and made those delicious attachments to be bestowed on somebody; and even all the imprudence lies in bestowing them on an unworthy object. If this reasoning is conclusive, as it certainly is, I must be allowed to "talk of Love."

It is, perhaps, rather wrong to speak highly to a friend of his letter; it is apt to lay one under a little restraint in their future letters, and restraint is the death of a friendly epistle; but there is one passage in your last charming letter, Thomson nor Shenstone never exceeded it, nor often came up to it. I shall certainly steal it, and set it in some future poetic production, and get immortal fame by it. 'Tis when you bid the scenes of nature remind me of Clarinda. Can I forget you, Clarinda? I would detest myself as a tasteless, unfeeling, insipid, infamous blockhead! I have loved women of ordinary merit, whom I could have loved for ever. You are the first, the only unexceptionable individual of the beauteous sex that I ever met with; and never woman more entirely possessed my soul. I know myself, and how far I can depend on passions, well. It has been my peculiar study.

I thank you for going to Miers. Urge him, for necessity calls, to have it done by the middle of next week: Wednesday the latest day. I want it for a breast-pin, to wear next my heart. I propose to keep sacred set times, to wander in the woods and wilds for meditation on you. Then, and only then, your lovely image shall be produced to the day, with a reverence akin to devotion.

. . . . . .

To-morrow night shall not be the last. Good night! I am perfectly stupid, as I supped late yesternight.

SYLVANDER.

No. XXVI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

WEDNESDAY, *February* 13, 1788.

MY EVER DEAREST CLARINDA—I make a numerous dinner-party wait me while I read yours and write this. Do not require that I should cease to love you, to adore you in my soul; 'tis to me impossible: your peace and happiness are to me dearer than my soul. Name the terms on which you wish to see me, to correspond with me, and you have them. I must love, pine, mourn, and adore in secret: this you must not deny me. You will ever be to me—

> "Dear as the light that visits those sad eyes.
> Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart."

I have not patience to read the Puritanic scrawl. Damned sophistry. Ye heavens, thou God of nature, thou Redeemer of mankind! ye look down with approving eyes on a passion inspired by the purest flame, and guarded by truth, delicacy, and honour; but the half inch soul of an unfeeling, cold-blooded, pitiful Presbyterian bigot cannot forgive anything above his dungeon-bosom and foggy head.

Farewell! I 'll be with you to-morrow evening; and be at rest in your mind. I will be yours in the way you think most to your happiness. I dare not proceed. I love, and will love you; and will, with joyous confidence, approach the throne of the Almighty Judge of men with your dear idea; and will despise the scum of sentiment, and the mist of sophistry.

SYLVANDER.

No. XXVII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

WEDNESDAY, MIDNIGHT, *Feb.* 13, 1788.

MADAM,

AFTER a wretched day, I am preparing for a sleepless night. I am going to address myself to the Almighty Witness of my actions—some time, perhaps very soon, my Almighty Judge. I am not going to be

the advocate of Passion: be Thou my inspirer and testimony, O God, as I plead the cause of truth!

I have read over your friend's haughty dictatorial letter: you are only answerable to your God in such a matter. Who gave any fellow-creature of yours (a fellow-creature incapable of being your judge, because not your peer) a right to catechise, scold, undervalue, abuse, and insult, wantonly and unhumanly to insult you thus? I don't wish, not even *wish* to deceive you, Madam. The Searcher of hearts is my witness how dear you are to me; but though it were possible you could be still dearer to me, I would not even kiss your hand at the expense of your conscience. Away with declamation! let us appeal to the bar of common sense. It is not mouthing everything sacred; it is not vague ranting assertions; it is not assuming, haughtily and insultingly assuming, the dictatorial language of a Roman Pontiff, that must dissolve a union like ours. Tell me, Madam, are you under the least shadow of an obligation to bestow your love, tenderness, caresses, affections, heart and soul, on Mr. M'Lehose—the man who has repeatedly, habitually, and barbarously broken through every tie of duty, nature, or gratitude to you? The laws of your country, indeed, for the most useful reasons of policy and sound government, have made your person inviolate; but are your heart and affections bound to one who gives not the least return of either to you? You cannot do it: it is not in the nature of things that you are bound to do it; the common feelings of humanity forbid it. Have you, then, a heart and affections which are no man's right? You have. It would be highly, ridiculously absurd to suppose the contrary. Tell me then, in the name of common sense, can it be wrong, is such a supposition compatible with the plainest ideas of right and wrong, that it is improper to bestow the heart and these affections on another—while that bestowing is not in the smallest degree hurtful to your duty to God, to your children, to yourself, or to society at large?

This is the great test: the consequences; let us see them. In a widowed, forlorn, lonely situation, with a bosom glowing with love and tenderness, yet so delicately situated that you cannot indulge these nobler feelings except you meet with a man who has a soul capable of

. . . . . .

SYLVANDER.

No. XXVIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

THURSDAY, 14*th February*, 1788.

"I AM distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan!" I have suffered, Clarinda, from your letter. My soul was in arms at the sad perusal: I dreaded that I had acted wrong. If I have robbed you of a friend, God forgive me! But, Clarinda, be comforted: let us raise the tone of our feelings a little higher and bolder. A fellow-creature who leaves us, who spurns us without just cause, though once our bosom friend—up with a little honest pride—let them go! How shall I comfort you, who am the cause of the injury? Can I wish that I had never seen you? that we had never met? No, I never will! But have I thrown you friendless? there is almost distraction in the thought. Father of mercies! against Thee often have I sinned: through Thy grace I will endeavour to do so no more. She who, Thou knowest, is dearer to me than myself—pour Thou the balm of peace into her past wounds, and hedge her about with Thy peculiar care, all her future days and nights. Strengthen her tender, noble mind firmly to suffer, and magnanimously to bear! Make me worthy of that friendship—that love she honours me with. May my attachment to her be pure as devotion, and lasting as immortal life. O Almighty Goodness, hear me! Be to her, at all times, particularly in the hour of distress or trial, a Friend and Comforter, a Guide and Guard.

"How are Thy servants blest, O Lord,
How sure is their defence!
Eternal Wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence."

Forgive me, Clarinda, the injury I have done you. To-night I shall be with you, as indeed I shall be ill at ease till I see you.

SYLVANDER.

No. XXIX.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

THURSDAY, 2 O'CLOCK, *Feb.* 14, 1788.

I JUST now received your first letter of yesterday, by the careless negligence of the penny post. Clarinda, matters are grown very serious with us: then seriously hear me, and hear me Heaven!

I met you, my dear Clarinda, by far the first of womankind, at least to me. I esteemed, I loved you at first sight, both of which attachments you have done me the honour to return. The longer I am acquainted with you, the more innate amiableness and worth I discover in you. You have suffered a loss, I confess, for my sake; but if the firmest, steadiest, warmest friendship; if every endeavour to be worthy of your friendship; if a love, strong as the ties of nature, and holy as the duties of religion; if all

these can make anything like a compensation for the evil I have occasioned you; if they be worth your acceptance, or can in the least add to your enjoyments — so help Sylvander, ye Powers above, in his hour of need, as he freely gives these all to Clarinda!

I esteem you, I love you as a friend; I admire you, I love you as a woman, beyond any one in all the circle of creation. I know I shall continue to esteem you, to love you, to pray for you, nay, to pray for myself for your sake.

Expect me at eight; and believe me to be ever, my dearest Madam, yours most entirely,

SYLVANDER.

No. XXX.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

FRIDAY, *February* 15, 1788.

WHEN matters, my love, are desperate, we must put on a desperate face;

"On Reason build resolve,
That column of true majesty in man."

or, as the same author finely says in another place—

"Let thy soul spring up,
And lay strong hold for help on Him that made thee."

I am yours, Clarinda, for life. Never be discouraged at all this. Look forward; in a few weeks I shall be somewhere or other out of the possibility of seeing you: till then I shall write you often, but visit you seldom. Your fame, your welfare, your happiness are dearer to me than any gratification whatever. Be comforted, my love! the present moment is the worst; the lenient hand of Time is daily and hourly either lightening the burden, or making us insensible to the weight. None of these friends, I mean Mr. —— and the other gentlemen, can hurt your worldly support: and for their friendship, in a little time you will learn to be easy, and, by and by, to be happy without it. A decent means of livelihood in the world, an approving God, a peaceful conscience, and one firm trusty friend—can anybody that has these be said to be unhappy? These are yours.

To-morrow evening I shall be with you about eight, probably for the last time, till I return to Edinburgh. In the meantime, should any of these two unlucky friends question you respecting me, whether I am *the Man*, I do not think they are entitled to any information. As to their jealousy and spying, I despise them. Adieu! my dearest Madam.

SYLVANDER.

No. XXXI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

GLASGOW,* MONDAY EVENING, 9 O'CLOCK, *February* 18, 1788.

THE attraction of Love, I find, is in an inverse proportion to the attraction of the Newtonian philosophy. In the system of Sir Isaac, the nearer objects are to one another, the stronger is the attractive force. In my system, every milestone that marked my progress from Clarinda, awakened a keener pang of attachment to her. How do you feel, my love? Is your heart ill at ease? I fear it. God forbid that these persecutors should harass that peace, which is more precious to me than my own! Be assured I shall ever think of you, muse on you, and, in my moments of devotion, pray for you. The hour that you are not in all my thoughts, "be that hour darkness; let the shadows of death cover it; let it not be numbered in the hours of the day!"

"When I forget the darling theme,
Be my tongue mute! my fancy paint no more!
And, dead to joy, forget my heart to beat!"

I have just met with my old friend, the ship Captain,† guess my pleasure! to meet you could alone have given me more. My brother William, too, the young saddler, has come to Glasgow to meet me; and here are we three spending the evening.

I arrived here too late to write by post; but I 'll wrap half a dozen sheets of blank paper together, and send it by the Fly, under the name of a parcel. You shall hear from me next post town. I would write you a longer letter, but for the present circumstances of my friend.

Adieu, my Clarinda! I am just going to propose your health by way of grace-drink.

SYLVANDER.

No. XVII.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

EDINBURGH, TUESDAY EVENING, 9 O'CLOCK, 19*th February*, 1788.

MR. ——— has just left me, after half an hour's most pathetic conversation. I told him of the usage I had met with on Sunday night, which he condemned much, as unmanly and ungenerous. I expressed my thanks for his

* Burns was now on his way from Edinburgh to Ayrshire.
† Mr. Richard Brown mentioned in the Poet's autobiography.

call; but he told me it was "merely to hide the change in his friendship from the world." Think how I was mortified! I was indeed; and affected so, as hardly to restrain tears. He did not name you, but spoke in terms that showed plainly he knew. Would to God he knew my Sylvander as I do! then might I hope to retain his friendship still; but I have made my choice, and you alone can ever make me repent it. Yet, while I live, I must regret the loss of such a man's friendship. My dear generous friend of my soul does so too. I love him for it! Yesterday I thought of you, and went over to Miss Nimmo, to have the luxury of talking of you. She was most kind; and praised you more than ever, as a man of worth, honour, genius. O how I could have listened to her for ever! She says she is afraid our attachment will be lasting. I stayed tea, was asked kindly, and did not choose to refuse, as I stayed last time when you were of the party. I wish you were here to-night to comfort me. I feel hurt and depressed; but to-morrow I hope for a cordial from your dear hand! I must bid you good night. Remember your Clarinda. Every blessing be yours!

Your letter this moment. Why did you write before to-day? Thank you for it. I figure your heartfelt enjoyment last night. O to have been of the party! Where was it! I 'd like to know the very spot. My head aches, so I can't write more; but I have kissed your dear lines over and over. Adieu! I 'll finish this to-morrow. Your

CLARINDA.

Wednesday, 11 a.m.

Mary was at my bedside by eight this morning. We had much chat about you. She is an affectionate, faithful soul. She tells me her defence of you was so warm, in a large company where you were blamed for some trivial affair, that she left them impressed with the idea of being in love. She laughs, and says, "'tis a pity to have the skaith, and nothing for her pains."

My spirits are greatly better to-day. I am a little anxious about Willie; his leg is to be lanced this day, and I shall be fluttered till the operation is fairly over. Mr. Wood thinks he will soon get well, when the matter lodged in it is discussed. God grant it! Oh, how can I ever be ungrateful to that good Providence who has blest me with so many undeserved mercies, and saved me often from the ruin I courted! The heart that feels its continual dependence on the Almighty is bound to keep His laws, by a tie stronger and tenderer than any human obligation. The feeling of Honour is a noble and powerful one; but can we be honourable to a fellow creature, and basely unmindful of our Bountiful Benefactor to whom we are indebted for life and all its blessings; and even for those very distinguishing qualities, Honour, Genius, and Benevolence?

I am sure you enter into these ideas; did you think with me in all points I should be too happy; but I 'll be silent. I may wish and pray, but you shall never again accuse me of presumption. My dear, I write this to Mauchline, to be waiting you. I hope, nay I am sure, 'twill be welcome.

You are an extravagant prodigal in more essential things than affection. To-day's post would have brought me yours, and saved you sixpence. However, it pleased me to know that, "though absent in body, you were present with me in spirit."

Do you know a Miss Nelly Hamilton in Ayr, daughter to Captain John Hamilton of the Excise cutter? I stayed with her at Kailzie, and love her. She is a dear, amiable, romantic girl. I wish much to write to her, and will enclose it for you to deliver personally if agreeable. She raved about your poems in summer, and wished to be acquainted. Let me know if you have any objections. She is an intimate of Miss Nimmo too. I think the streets look deserted-like since Monday; and there 's a certain insipidity in good kind of folks I once enjoyed not a little. You who are a casuist, explain these deep enigmas. Miss Wardrope supped here on Monday. She once named you, which kept me from falling asleep. I drank your health in a glass of ale (as the lasses do at Hallowe'en) "in to mysel'."

Happy Sylvander! to meet with the dear charities of brother, sister, parent! whilst I have none of these, and belong to nobody. Yes, I have my children, and my heart's friend, Sylvander—the only one I have found capable of that nameless, delicate attachment, which none but noble, romantic minds can comprehend. I envy you the Captain's society. Don't tell him of the "Iron Chain," lest he call us both fools. I saw the happy trio in my mind's eye. So absence increases your fondness, 'tis ever so in great souls. Let the poor worldlings enjoy—*possess*, I mean, for they can't enjoy—their golden dish; we have each of us an estate, derived from the Father of the universe, into whose hands I trust we 'll return it, cultivated so as to prove an inexhaustible treasure through the endless ages of eternity!

Afternoon.

Mr. Wood has not come, so the affair is not over. I hesitate about sending this till I hear further; but I think you said you 'd be at Mauchline on Thursday: at any rate you 'll get this on your arrival.

Farewell! may you ever abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Yours,

CLARINDA.

No. XXXII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

KILMARNOCK, FRIDAY, *Feb.* 22, 1788.

I WROTE you, my dear Madam, the moment I alighted in Glasgow. Since then I have not had opportunity: for in Paisley, where I arrived next day, my worthy, wise friend, Mr. Pattison, did not allow me a moment's respite. I was there ten hours; during which time I was introduced to nine men worth six thousands; five men worth ten thousands; his brother, richly worth twenty thousands; and a young weaver, who will have thirty thousands good, when his father, who has no more children than the said weaver, and a Whig kirk, dies. Mr. P. was bred a zealous Antiburgher; but, during his widowerhood, he has found their strictness incompatible with certain compromises he is often obliged to make with those Powers of darkness—the devil, the world, and the flesh: so he, good, merciful man! talked privately to me of the absurdity of eternal torments; the liberality of sentiment in indulging the honest instincts of nature; the mysteries of . . . &c. He has a son, however, that, at sixteen, has repeatedly minted at certain privileges only proper for sober, staid men, who can use the good things of this life without abusing them; but the father's parental vigilance has hitherto hedged him in, amid a corrupt and evil world.

His only daughter, who, "if the beast be to the fore, and the branks bide hale," will have seven thousand pounds when her old father steps into the dark Factory-office of Eternity with his well-thummed web of life, has put him again and again in a commendable fit of indignation, by requesting a harpsichord. "O! these boarding-schools!" exclaims my prudent friend. "She was a good spinner and sewer, till I was advised by her foes and mine to give her a year of Edinburgh!"

After two bottles more, my much-respected friend opened up to me a project, a legitimate child of Wisdom and Good Sense; 'twas no less than a long thought-on and deeply-matured design to marry a girl, fully as elegant in her form as the famous priestess whom Saul consulted in his last hours, and who had been second maid of honour to his deceased wife. This, you may be sure, I highly applauded, so I hope for a pair of gloves by and by. I spent the two bypast days at Dunlop House with that worthy family to whom I was deeply indebted early in my poetic career; and in about two hours I shall present your "twa wee sarkies" to the little fellow. My dearest Clarinda, you are ever present with me; and these hours, that drawl by among the fools and rascals of this world, are only supportable in the idea, that they are the forerunners of that happy hour that ushers me to "the mistress of my soul." Next week I shall visit Dumfries, and next again return to Edinburgh. My letters, in these hurrying dissipated hours, will be heavy trash; but you know the writer. God bless you.

SYLVANDER.

No. XVIII.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

EDINBURGH, FRIDAY EVENING, *Feb.* 22, 1788.

I WISH you had given me a hint, my dear Sylvander, that you were to write to me only once in a week. Yesterday I looked for a letter; to-day never doubted it; but both days have terminated in disappointment. A thousand conjectures have conspired to make me most unhappy. Often have I suffered much disquiet from forming the idea of such an attention, on such and such an occasion, and experienced quite the reverse. But in you, and you alone, I have ever found my highest demands of kindness accomplished; nay, even my fondest wishes, not gratified only, but anticipated! To what then can I attribute your not writing me one line since Monday?

God forbid that your nervous ailment has incapacitated you for that office from which you derived pleasure singly; as well as that most delicate of all enjoyments, pleasure reflected. To-morrow I shall hope to hear from you. Hope, blessed Hope, thou balm of every woe, possess and fill my bosom with thy benign influence!

I have been solitary since the tender farewell till to-night. I was solicited to go to Dr. Moyes's Lecture with Miss Craig and a gallant of hers, a student; one of the many stupid animals, knowing only in the Science of Puppyism, or "the nice conduct of a clouded cane." With what sovereign contempt did I compare his trite, insipid frivolity with the intelligent, manly observation which ever marks the conversation of Sylvander. He is a glorious piece of Divine workmanship, Dr. Moyes. The subject to-night was the origin of minerals, springs, lakes, and the ocean. Many parts were far beyond my weak comprehension, and indeed that of most women. What I understood delighted me, and altogether raised my thoughts to the infinite wisdom and boundless goodness of the Deity. The man himself marks both. Presented with a universal blank of Nature's works, his mind appears to be illuminated with Celestial light. He concluded with some lines of the Essay on Man:—"All are

but parts of one stupendous whole," &c., a passage I have often read with sublime pleasure.

Miss Burnet sat behind me. What an angelic girl! I stared at her, never having seen her so near. I remember you talking of her, &c. What felicity to witness her "softly speak and sweetly smile!" How could you celebrate any other Clarinda! O I would have adored you, as Pope of exquisite taste and refinement, had you loved, sighed, and written upon her for ever! breathing your passion only to the woods and streams. But Poets, I find, are not quite incorporeal, more than others. My dear Sylvander, to be serious, I really wonder you ever admired Clarinda after beholding Miss Burnet's superior charms. If I don't hear to-morrow, I shall form dreadful reasons. God forbid! Bishop Geddes was within a foot of me too. What field for contemplation—both! Good night. God bless you! prays

CLARINDA.

No. XXXIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

MOSSGIEL, SATURDAY, 23*rd Feb.*, 1788.

I HAVE just now, my ever dear Madam, delivered your kind present to my sweet little Bobbie, whom I find a very fine fellow. Your letter was waiting me. Your interview with Mr. Kemp opens a wound, ill-closed, in my breast; not that I think his friendship of so much consequence to you, but because you set such a value on it.

Now for a little news that will please you. I, this morning, as I came home, called for a certain woman.* I am disgusted with her—I cannot endure her! I, while my heart smote me for the profanity, tried to compare her with my Clarinda: 'twas setting the expiring glimmer of a farthing taper beside the cloudless glory of the meridian sun. *Here* was tasteless insipidity, vulgarity of soul, and mercenary fawning; *there* polished good sense, Heaven-born genius, and the most generous, the most delicate, the most tender passion. I have done with her, and she with me.

I set off to-morrow for Dumfries-shire. 'Tis merely out of compliment to Mr. Miller; for I know the Indies must be my lot. I will write you from Dumfries, if these horrid postages don't frighten me.

> "Whatever place, whatever land I see,
> My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
> Still to 'Clarinda' turns with ceaseless pain,
> And drags at each remove a lengthen'd chain."

* His Jean, in three months afterwards Mrs. Burns!

I just stay to write you a few lines, before I go to call on my friend, Mr. Gavin Hamilton. I hate myself as an unworthy sinner, because these interviews of old dear friends make me, for half a moment, almost forget Clarinda.

Remember to-morrow evening, at eight o'clock, I shall be with the Father of Mercies, at that hour on your own account. Farewell! If the post goes not to-night, I 'll finish the other page to-morrow morning.

SYLVANDER.

P.S.—Remember.

No. XXXIV.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

CUMNOCK, 2*nd March*, 1788.

I HOPE, and am certain, that my generous Clarinda will not think my silence, for now a long week, has been in any degree owing to my forgetfulness. I have been tossed about through the country ever since I wrote you; and am here returning from Dumfries-shire, at an inn, the post-office of the place, with just so long time as my horse eats its corn, to write you. I have been hurried with business and dissipation, almost equal to the insidious import of the Persian Monarch's mandate, when he forbade asking petition of God or man for forty days. Had the venerable prophet been as throng as I, he had not broken the decree; at least not thrice a day.

I am thinking my farming scheme will yet hold. A worthy intelligent farmer, my father's friend and my own, has been with me on the spot; he thinks the bargain practicable. I am myself, on a more serious review of the lands, much better pleased with them. I won't mention this in writing to anybody but you and Mr. Ainslie. Don't accuse me of being fickle; I have the two plans of life before me, and I wish to adopt the one most likely to procure me independence.

I shall be in Edinburgh next week. I long to see you; your image is omnipresent to me; nay, I am convinced I would soon idolatrize it most seriously; so much do absence and memory improve the medium through which one sees the much-loved object. To-night, at the sacred hour of eight, I expect to meet you at the Throne of Grace. I hope, as I go home to-night, to find a letter from you at the post-office in Mauchline; I have just once seen that dear hand since I left Edinburgh; a letter,

indeed, which much affected me. Tell me, first of womankind, will my warmest attachment, my sincerest friendship, my correspondence—will they be any compensation for the sacrifices you make for my sake? If they will, they are yours. If I settle on the farm I propose, I am just a day and a half's ride from Edinburgh. We shall meet: don't you say, "Perhaps, too often!"

Farewell, my fair, my charming Poetess! May all good things ever attend you. I am ever, my dearest Madam, yours,

SYLVANDER.

No. XIX.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

EDINBURGH, *March* 5, 1788.

I RECEIVED yours from Cumnock about an hour ago; and to show you my good-nature sit down to write to you immediately. I fear, Sylvander, you overvalue my generosity; for, believe me, it will be some time ere I can cordially forgive you the pain your silence has caused me! Did you ever feel that sickness of heart which arises from "hope deferred?" That—the cruellest of pains—you have inflicted on me for eight days by-past. I hope I can make every reasonable allowance for the hurry of business and dissipation. Yet had I been ever so engrossed, I should have found one hour out of the twenty-four to write to you. No more of it. I accept of your apologies; but am hurt that any should have been necessary betwixt us on such a tender occasion.

I am happy that the farming scheme promises so well. There 's no fickleness, my dear Sir, in changing for the better. I never liked the Excise for you; and feel a sensible pleasure in the hope of your becoming a sober, industrious farmer. My prayers in this affair are heard I hope, so far: may they be answered completely! The distance is the only thing I regret; but whatever tends to your welfare over-weighs all other considerations. I hope ere then to grow wiser, and to lie easy under six weeks' silence. I had begun to think that you had fully experienced the truth of Sir Isaac's philosophy.

I have been under unspeakable obligations to your friend, Mr. Ainslie. I had not a mortal to whom I could speak of your name but him. He has called often; and, by sympathy, not a little alleviated my anxiety. I tremble lest you should have devolved what you used to term your "folly," upon Clarinda: more 's the pity. 'Tis never graceful but on the male side; but I shall learn more wisdom in future. Example has often good effects.

I got both your letters from Kilmarnock and Mauchline, and would, perhaps, have written to you unbidden, had I known anything of the geography of the country; but I knew not whether you would return by Mauchline or not, nor could Mr. Ainslie inform me. I have met with several little rubs that hurt me the more that I had not a bosom to pour them into—

"On some fond breast the feeling soul relies."

Mary, I have not once set eyes on, since I wrote to you. O that I should be formed susceptible of kindness, never, never to be fully, or at least, habitually returned! "Trim (said my uncle Toby), I wish, Trim, I were dead."

Mr. Ainslie called just now to tell me he had heard from you. You would see, by my last, how anxious I was, even then, to hear from you. 'Tis the first time I ever had reason to be so: I hope 'twill be the last. My thoughts were yours both Sunday nights at eight. Why should my letter have affected you? You know I count all things (Heaven excepted) but loss that I may win and keep you. I supped at Mr. Kemp's on Friday. Had you been an invisible spectator with what perfect ease I acquitted myself, you would have been pleased, highly pleased with me.

Interrupted by a visit from Miss R———. She was inquiring kindly for you. I delivered your compliments to her. She means (as you once said) all the kindness in the world, but she wants that "finer chord." Ah! Sylvander, happy, in my mind, are they who are void of it. Alas! it too often "thrills with anguish."

I hope you have not forgotten to kiss the little cherub for me. Give him fifty, and think Clarinda blessing him all the while. I pity his mother sincerely, and wish a certain affair happily over. My Willie is in good health, except his leg, which confines him close since it was opened; and Mr. Wood says it will be a very tedious affair. He has prescribed sea-bathing as soon as the season admits. I never see Miss Nimmo. Her indifference wounds me; but all these things make me fly to the Father of Mercies, who is the inexhaustible Fountain of all kindness. How could you ever mention "postages?" I counted on a crown at least; and have only spent one poor shilling. If I had but a shilling in the world, you would have sixpence; nay, eightpence, if I could contrive to live on a groat. I am avaricious only in your letters; you are so indeed. Farewell. Yours,

CLARINDA.

No. XXXV.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

MAUCHLINE, *6th March*, 1788.

I OWN myself guilty, Clarinda: I should have written you last week. But when you recollect, my dearest Madam, that yours of this night's post is only the third I have from you, and that this is the fifth or sixth I have sent to you, you will not reproach me with a good grace for unkindness. I have always some kind of idea, not to sit down to write a letter, except I have time and possession of my faculties so as to do some justice to my letter; which at present is rarely my situation. For instance, yesterday I dined at a friend's at some distance; the savage hospitality of this country spent me the most part of the night over the nauseous potion in the bowl. This day, sick—head-ache—low spirits—miserable—fasting, except for a draught of water or small beer. Now, eight o'clock at night—only able to crawl ten minutes' walk into Mauchline to wait the post, in the pleasurable hope of hearing from the mistress of my soul.

But, truce with all this! When I sit down to write to you, all is harmony and peace. A hundred times a day do I figure you, before your taper, your book or work laid aside, as I get within the room. How happy have I been! and how little of that scantling portion of time, called the life of man, is sacred to happiness, much less transport.

I could moralize to-night, like a death's head.

> "O, what is life, that thoughtless wish of all!
> A drop of honey in a draught of gall."

Nothing astonishes me more, when a sickness clogs the wheels of life, than the thoughtless career we run in the hour of health. "None saith, where is God, my Maker, that giveth songs in the night: who teacheth us more knowledge than the beasts of the field, and more understanding than the fowls of the air?"

Give me, my Maker, to remember Thee! Give me to act up to the dignity of my nature! Give me to feel "another's woe;" and continue with me that dear-loved friend that feels with mine!

The dignifying and dignified consciousness of an honest man, and the well grounded trust in approving Heaven, are two most substantial foundations of happiness.

. . . . . .

I could not have written a page to any mortal except yourself. I 'll write you by Sunday's post. Adieu. Good night.

SYLVANDER.

No. XXXVI.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

MOSSGIEL, *7th March*, 1788.

CLARINDA, I have been so stung with your reproach for unkindness, a sin so unlike me, a sin I detest more than a breach of the whole Decalogue, fifth, sixth, seventh, and ninth articles excepted, that I believe I shall not rest in my grave about it, if I die before I see you. You have often allowed me the head to judge, and the heart to feel, the influence of female excellence: was it not blasphemy then, against your own charms, and against my feelings, to suppose that a short fortnight could abate my passion! You, my Love, may have your cares and anxieties to disturb you; but they are the usual occurrences of life: your future views are fixed, and your mind in a settled routine. Could not you, my ever dearest Madam, make a little allowance for a man, after long absence, paying a short visit to a country full of friends, relations, and early intimates? Cannot you guess, my Clarinda, what thoughts, what cares, what anxious forebodings, hopes and fears, must crowd the breast of the man of keen sensibility, when no less is on the tapis than his aim, his employment, his very existence, through future life?

To be overtopped in any thing else, I can bear; but in the lists of generous love, I defy all mankind; not even the tender, the fond, the loving Clarinda! she whose strength of attachment, whose melting soul, may vie with Eloise and Sappho, not even she can overpay the affection she owes me!

Now that, not my apology, but my defence is made, I feel my soul respire more easily. I know you will go along with me in my justification—would to heaven you could in my adoption too! I mean an adoption beneath the stars—an adoption where I might revel in the immediate beams of her

> "the bright sun of all her sex."

I would not have you, my dear Madam, so much hurt at Miss Nimmo's coldness. 'Tis placing yourself below her, an honour she by no means deserves. We ought, when we wish to be economists in happiness, we ought, in the first place, to fix the standard of our own character; and when, on full examination, we know where we stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt, or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices, or despise their judgment. I know, my dear, you will say this is self-conceit; but I call it self-knowledge; the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be, what he wishes himself to be thought: the other is the

honest justice that a man of sense, who has thoroughly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard, this column in our own mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay, the very weakness and wickedness of our fellow-creatures.

I urge this, my dear, both to confirm myself in the doctrine, which, I assure you, I sometimes need; and because I know that this causes you often much disquiet. To return to Miss Nimmo: she is certainly a most worthy soul, and equalled by very, very few, in goodness of heart. But, can she boast more goodness of heart than Clarinda? not even prejudice will dare to say so; for penetration and discernment, Clarinda sees far beyond her. To wit, Miss Nimmo dare make no pretence: to Clarinda's wit scarce any of her sex dare make pretence. Personal charms—it would be ridiculous to run the parallel: and for conduct in life, Miss Nimmo was never called out, either much to do, or to suffer; Clarinda has been both, and has performed her part, where Miss Nimmo would have sunk at the bare idea.

Away then with these disquietudes? Let us pray with the honest weaver of Kilbarchan, "Lord send us a gude conceit o' oursel'!" or, in the words of the auld sang,

> "Who does me disdain, I can scorn him again,
> And I 'll never mind any such foes."

There is an error in the commerce of intimacy. . . .
. . . . . .

Happy is our lot, indeed, when we meet with an honest merchant who is qualified to deal with us on our own terms; but this is a rarity. With almost everybody, we must pocket our pearls, less or more; and learn in the old Scots phrase, "to gie siclike as we get." For this reason, we should try to erect a kind of bank or storehouse in our own minds; or, as the Psalmist recommends, "commune with our own hearts, and be still." This is exactly the*
. . . . . .

I wrote you yesternight, which will reach you long before this can. I may write Mr. Ainslie before I see him, but I am not sure. Farewell! and remember

SYLVANDER.

No. XX.

CLARINDA TO SYLVANDER.

EDINBURGH, *8th March*, 1788.

I WAS agreeably surprised by your answer to mine of Wednesday evening this morning. I thought it always took two days, a letter from this to Mauchline, and did not expect yours sooner than Monday. This is the fifth from you, and the fourth time I am now writing you. I hate calculating them; like some things, they don't do to be numbered. I wish you had written from Dumfries as you promised; but I do not impute it to any cause but hurry of business, &c. I hope I shall never live to reproach you with unkindness. You never ought to put off till you "have time to do justice to your letters." I have sufficient memorials of your abilities in that way; and last week, two lines to have said "How do ye, my Clarinda?" would have saved me days and nights of cruel disquietude—"A word to the wise" you know. I know human nature better than to expect always fine flights of fancy, or exertions of genius, and feel in myself the effects of this "crazy mortal coil" upon its glorious inhabitant. To-day I have a clogging headache; but however stupid, I know (at least I hope) a letter from your heart's friend will be acceptable. It will reach you to-morrow, I hope.

Shocking custom! one can't entertain with hospitality, without taxing their guests with the consequences you mention. Your reflections upon the effects which sickness has on our retrospect of ourselves, are noble. I see my Sylvander will be all I wish him, before he leaves this world. Do you remember that simple eulogium I pronounced on you, when Miss Nimmo asked what I thought of you? "He 's ane of God's ain; but his time 's no come yet." It was like a speech from your worthy mother, whom I revere. She would have joined me with a heart-felt sigh, which none but mothers know. It is rather a bad picture of us, that we are most prone to call upon God in trouble. Ought not the daily blessings of health, peace, competence, friends—ought not these to awaken our constant gratitude to the Giver of all? I imagine that the heart which does not occasionally glow with filial love in the hours of prosperity, can hardly hope to feel much comfort in flying to God in the time of distress. O my dear Sylvander! that we may be enabled to set Him before us, as our witness, benefactor, and judge at all times, and on all occasions!

In the name of wonder, how could you spend ten hours with such a heathen as Mr. Pattison?† What a despicable character! Religion! he knows only the name; none of her real votaries ever wished to make any such shameful compromises. But 'tis Scripture verified; the demon of avarice, his original devil, finding him empty, called in other seven more impure spirits, and so completely infernalized him. Destitute of discernment to perceive your merit, or taste to relish it, my astonishment at his fondness of you is only surpassed by your more than Puritanic patience in listening to his shocking nonsense! I hope you received his certificate. I was told it was in a

* The latter part of this letter has been torn and defaced.

† "O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us!"

tattered condition some months ago, and that then he proposed putting it on parchment by way of preserving it. Don't call me severe: I hate all who would "turn the grace of God into licentiousness;" 'tis commonly the weaker part of mankind who attempt it.

"Religion, thou the soul of happiness."

Yesterday morning in bed I happened to think of you. I said to myself—"My bonnie Lizzie Baillie," &c., and laughed; but I felt a delicious swell of heart, and my eyes swam in tears. I know not if your sex ever feel this burst of affection; 'tis an emotion indescribable. You see I 'm grown a fool since you left me. You know I was rational when you first knew me; but I always grow more foolish the farther I am from those I love: by and by I suppose I shall be insane altogether.

I am happy your little lamb is doing so well. Did you execute my commission? You had a great stock in hand; and if any agreeable customers came in the way, you would dispose of some of them, I fancy, hoping soon to be supplied with a fresh assortment. For my part, I can truly say I have had no demand. I really believe you have taught me dignity, which, partly through good nature, and partly by misfortune, had been too much laid aside; but which now I will never part with. Why should I not keep it up? Admired, esteemed, beloved, by one of the first of mankind! Not all the wealth of Peru could have purchased these. O Sylvander, I am great in my own eyes when I think how high I am in your esteem! You have shown me the merit I possess; I knew it not before. Even Joseph* trembled t'other day in my presence. "Husbands looked mild, and savages grew tame!" Love and cherish your friend Mr. Ainslie, he is your friend indeed. I long for next week; happy days, I hope, yet await us. When you meet young Beauties, think of Clarinda's affection, of her situation, of how much her happiness depends on you. Farewell till we meet. God be with you!

CLARINDA.

P.S.—Will you take the trouble to send for a small parcel left at Dunlop and Wilson's, Booksellers, Trongate, Glasgow, for me, and bring it with you in the Fly?

No. XXXVII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Edinburgh, Monday, Noon, 17*th March*, 1788.

I will meet you to-morrow, Clarinda, as you appoint. My Excise affair is just concluded, and I have got my order for instructions: so far good. Wednesday night I am engaged to sup among some of the principals of the Excise; so can only make a call for you that evening; but next day, I stay to dine with one of the Commissioners, so cannot go till Friday morning.

Your hopes, your fears, your cares, my love, are mine; so don't mind them. I will take you in my hand through the dreary wilds of this world, and scare away the ravening bird or beast that would annoy you. I saw Mary in town to-day, and asked her if she had seen you. I shall certainly bespeak Mr. Ainslie as you desire.

Excuse me, my dearest angel, this hurried scrawl and miserable paper; circumstances make both. Farewell till to-morrow!

SYLVANDER.

* Who "Joseph" was is not known. She had no son of that name.

No. XXXVIII.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Edinburgh, Tuesday Morning, 18*th March*, 1788.

I am just hurrying away to wait on the Great Man, Clarinda; but I have more respect to my own peace and happiness than to set out without waiting on you; for my imagination, like a child's favourite bird, will fondly flutter along with this scrawl, till it perch on your bosom. I thank you for all the happiness bestowed on me yesterday. The walk—delightful; the evening—rapture. Do not be uneasy to-day, Clarinda; forgive me. I am in rather better spirits to-day, though I had but an indifferent night. Care, anxiety, sat on my spirits; and all the cheerfulness of this morning is the fruit of some serious important ideas that lie, in their realities, beyond "the dark and the narrow house," as Ossian, prince of poets, says. The Father of Mercies be with you, Clarinda! and every good thing attend you!

SYLVANDER.

No. XXXIX.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Wednesday Morning, 19*th March*, 1788.

Clarinda, will that envious night-cap hinder you from appearing at the window as I pass? "Who is she that

looketh forth as the morning; fair as the sun, clear as the moon, terrible as an army with banners?"

Do not accuse me of fond folly for this line; you know I am a cool lover. I mean by these presents greeting, to let you to wit, that arch-rasc—, Cr—ch, has not done my business yesternight, which has put off my leaving town till Monday morning. To-morrow, at eleven, I meet with him for the last time; just the hour I should have met far more agreeable company.

You will tell me this evening whether you cannot make our hour of meeting to-morrow one o'clock. I have just now written Creech such a letter, that the very goose-feather in my hand shrunk back from the line, and seemed to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake!" I am forming ideal schemes of vengeance. O for a little of my will on him! I just wished that he loved as I do—as glorious an object as Clarinda—and that he were doomed. Adieu, and think on

SYLVANDER.

No. XL.

SYLVANDER TO CLARINDA.

Friday, 9 o'clock, Night, 21*st March*, 1788.

I am just now come in, and have read your letter. The first thing I did was to thank the Divine Disposer of events, that he has had such happiness in store for me as the connexion I have with you. Life, my Clarinda, is a weary, barren path; and woe be to him or her that ventures on it alone! For me, I have my dearest partner of my soul: Clarinda and I will make out our pilgrimage together. Wherever I am, I shall constantly let her know how I go on, what I observe in the world around me, and what adventures I meet with. Will it please you, my love, to get, every week, or at least, every fortnight, a packet, two or three sheets, full of remarks, nonsense, news, rhymes, and old songs?

Will you open, with satisfaction and delight, a letter from a man who loves you, who has loved you, and who will love you to death, through death, and for ever? Oh Clarinda! what do I owe to Heaven for blessing me with such a piece of exalted excellence as you! I call over your idea, as a miser counts over his treasure! Tell me, were you studious to please me last night? I am sure you did it to transport. How rich am I who have such a treasure as you! You know me; you know how to make me happy, and you do it most effectually. God bless you with

"Long life, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend!"

To-morrow night, according to your own direction, I shall watch the window: 'tis the star that guides me to Paradise. The great relish to all is—that Honour—that Innocence—that Religion, are the witnesses and guarantees of our happiness. "The Lord God knoweth," and perhaps "Israel he shall know," my love and your merit. Adieu, Clarinda! I am going to remember you in my prayers.

SYLVANDER.

No. XLI.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.*

Ellisland, *March* 9, 1789.

Madam,

The letter you wrote me to Heron's carried its own answer in its bosom; you forbade me to write you, unless I was willing to plead guilty to a certain indictment that you were pleased to bring against me. As I am convinced of my own innocence, and, though conscious of high imprudence and egregious folly, can lay my hand upon my breast, and attest the rectitude of my heart, you will pardon me, Madam, if I do not carry my complaisance so far as humbly to acquiesce in the name of "Villain," merely out of compliment to your opinion, much as I esteem your judgment, and warmly as I regard your worth.

I have already told you, and I again aver it, that, at the period of time alluded to, I was not under the smallest mortal tie to Mrs. Burns; nor did I, nor could I then know, all the powerful circumstances that omnipotent necessity was busy laying in wait for me. When you call over the scenes that have passed between us, you will survey the conduct of an honest man struggling successfully with temptations, the most powerful that ever beset humanity, and preserving untainted honour in situations where the austerest virtue would have forgiven a fall; situations that, I will dare to say, not a single individual of all his kind, even with half his sensibility and passion, could have encountered without ruin; and I leave you to guess, Madam, how such a man is likely to digest an accusation of "perfidious treachery."

* No more Letters to Mrs. M'Lehose as *Clarinda*. The spell is broken. See Life, pp. lxiii., lxxvi., lxxvii.

Was I to blame, Madam, in being the distracted victim of charms which, I affirm, no man ever approached with impunity? Had I seen the least glimmering of hope that these charms could ever have been mine; or even had not iron Necessity—— But these are unavailing words.

I would have called on you when I was in town, indeed I could not have resisted it, but that Mr. Ainslie told me you were determined to avoid your windows while I was in town, lest even a glance of me should occur in the street.

When I shall have regained your good opinion, perhaps I may venture to solicit your friendship; but, be that as it may, the first of her sex I ever knew shall always be the object of my warmest good wishes.

R. B.

No. XLII.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

ELLISLAND, *February*, 1790.

I HAVE indeed been ill, Madam, the whole winter. An incessant headache, depression of spirits, and all the truly miserable consequences of a deranged nervous system, have made dreadful havoc of my health and peace. Add to all this, a line of life into which I have lately entered obliges me to ride, upon an average, at least two hundred miles every week. However, thank Heaven, I am now greatly better in health. . . .

I could not answer your last letter but one. When you in so many words tell a man that you look on his letters with a smile of contempt, in what language, Madam, can he answer you? Though I were conscious that I had acted wrong—and I am conscious I have acted wrong—yet would I not be bullied into repentance.

I cannot, will not, enter into extenuatory circumstances; else I could show you how my precipitate, headlong, unthinking conduct, leagued with a conjuncture of unlucky events to thrust me out of a possibility of keeping the path of rectitude, to curse me by an irreconcilable war between my duty and my nearest wishes, and to damn me with a choice only of different species of error and misconduct.

I dare not trust myself farther with the subject. The following song is one of my latest productions, and I send it you, as I would do any thing else, because it pleases myself:—

"Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray
That lov'st to greet the early morn," &c.*

R. B.

* See vol. i. p. 158.

No. XLIII.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, LAMOND'S LAND, EDINBURGH.

LEADHILLS, THURSDAY NOON, *August*, 1791.

I HAVE received both your letters, Madam, and ought, and would have answered the first, long ago; but on what subject could I write you? How can you expect a correspondent should write you, when you declare that you mean to preserve his letters with a view, sooner or later, to expose them on the pillory of derision, and the rack of criticism? This is gagging me completely as to speaking the sentiments of my bosom; else, Madam, I could perhaps too truly

"Join grief with grief, and echo sighs to thine."

I have perused your most beautiful, but most pathetic poem—do not ask me how often, or with what emotions. You know that "I dare to *sin*, but not to *lie!*" Your verses wring the confession from my inmost soul—I will say it, expose it as you please—that I have more than once in my life, been the victim of a damning conjuncture of circumstances; and that to me you must be ever

"Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes."

I have just, since I had yours, composed the following stanzas. Let me know your opinion of them.

"Sensibility, how charming,
Thou, my Friend, canst truly tell," &c.†

I have one other piece in your taste; but I have just a snatch of time.

"Now Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree," &c.‡

Such, my dearest Nancy, were the words of the amiable but unfortunate Mary. Misfortune seems to take a peculiar pleasure in darting her arrows against "honest men and bonnie lassies." Of this you are too, too just a proof; but may your future fate be a bright exception to the remark! In the words of Hamlet,

"Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me."

R. B.

No. XXI.

TO MR. ROBERT BURNS.

November, 1791.

SIR,

I TAKE the liberty of addressing a few lines in behalf of your old acquaintance, Jenny Clow, who, to all appear-

† See vol. i. p. 192. ‡ See vol. i. p. 185.

ance, is at this moment dying. Obliged, from all the symptoms of a rapid decay, to quit her service, she is gone to a room almost without common necessaries, untended and unmourned. In circumstances so distressing, to whom can she so naturally look for aid as to the father of her child, the man for whose sake she has suffered many a sad and anxious night, shut from the world, with no other companions than guilt and solitude? You have now an opportunity to evince you indeed possess these fine feelings you have delineated, so as to claim the just admiration of your country. I am convinced I need add nothing farther to persuade you to act as every consideration of humanity as well as gratitude must dictate. I am, Sir, your sincere well-wisher,

A. M.

No. XLIV.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, 23*rd November*, 1791.

IT is extremely difficult, my dear Madam, for me to deny a lady anything; but to a lady whom I regard with all the endearing epithets of respectful esteem and old friendship, how shall I find the language of refusal? I have, indeed, a shade of the lady, which I keep, and shall ever keep in the *sanctum sanctorum* of my most anxious care. That lady, though an unfortunate and irresistible conjuncture of circumstances has lost me her esteem, yet she shall be ever, to me

"Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart."

I am rather anxious for her sake, as to her voyage. I pray God my fears may be groundless. By the way, I have this moment a letter from her, with a paragraph or two conceived in so stately a style, that I would not pardon it in any created being except herself; but, as the subject interests me much, I shall answer it to you, as I do not know her present address. I am sure she must have told you of a girl, a Jenny Clow, who had the misfortune to make me a father, with contrition I own it, contrary to the laws of our most excellent constitution, in our holy Presbyterian hierarchy.

Mrs. M—— tells me a tale of the poor girl's distress that makes my very heart weep blood. I will trust that your goodness will apologize to your delicacy for me, when I beg of you, for Heaven's sake, to send a porter to the poor woman—Mrs. M., it seems, knows where she is to be found—with five shillings in my name; and, as I shall be in Edinburgh on Tuesday first, for certain, make the poor wench leave a line for me, before Tuesday, at Mr. Mackay's, White Hart Inn, Grassmarket, where I shall put up; and, before I am two hours in town, I shall see the poor girl, and try what is to be done for her relief. I would have taken my boy from her long ago, but she would never consent.

I shall do myself the very great pleasure to call for you when I come to town, and repay you the sum your goodness shall have advanced. . . . . and most obedient,

R. B.

No. XLV.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, 15*th December*, 1791.

I HAVE some merit, my ever dearest of women, in attracting and securing the heart of Clarinda. In her I met with the most accomplished of all womankind, the first of all God's works; and yet I, even I, had the good fortune to appear amiable in her sight.

By the by, this is the sixth letter that I have written you since I left you; and if you were an ordinary being, as you are a creature very extraordinary—an instance of what God Almighty in the plenitude of his power, and the fulness of his goodness, can make!—I would never forgive you for not answering my letters.

I have sent in your hair, a part of the parcel you gave me, with a measure, to Mr. Bruce the jeweller in Prince's Street, to get a ring done for me. I have likewise sent in the verses "On Sensibility" altered to

"Sensibility how charming,
Dearest Nancy, thou canst tell," &c.

to the Editor of the "Scots Songs," of which you have three volumes, to set to a most beautiful air; out of compliment to the first of women, my ever-beloved, my ever-sacred Clarinda. I shall probably write you to-morrow. In the meantime, from a man who is literally drunk, accept and forgive!

R. B.

No. XLVI.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

DUMFRIES, 27*th December*, 1791.

I HAVE yours, my ever dearest Madam, this moment. I have just ten minutes before the post goes; and these I

shall employ in sending you some songs I have just been composing to different tunes, for the "Collection of Songs," of which you have three volumes, and of which you shall have the fourth.

"Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae farewel, and then for ever," &c. *

"Behold the hour, the boat arrive!
My dearest Nancy, O farewel," &c. †

"Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December!
Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care," &c. ‡

The rest of this song is on the wheels. Adieu. Adieu.

R. B.

No. XXII.

TO MR. ROBERT BURNS.

25th January, 1792.

AGITATED, hurried to death, I sit down to write a few lines to you, my ever dear, dear friend! We are ordered abroad on Saturday—to sail on Sunday. And now, my dearest Sir, I have a few things to say to you, as the last advice of her, who could have lived or died with you! I am happy to know of your applying so steadily to the business you are engaged in; but, oh remember, this life is a short, passing scene! Seek God's favour—keep His commandments—be solicitous to prepare for a happy eternity! There, I trust, we will meet, in perfect and never-ending bliss. Read my former letters attentively: let the religious tenets there expressed sink deep into your mind; meditate on them with candour, and your accurate judgment must be convinced that they accord with the words of Eternal Truth! Laugh no more at holy things, or holy men: remember, "without holiness, no man shall see God." Another thing, and I have done: as you value my peace, do not write me to Jamaica, until I let you know you may with safety. Write Mary often. She feels for you! and judges of your present feelings by her own. I am sure you will be happy to hear of my happiness: and I trust you will—soon. If there is time, you may drop me a line ere I go, to inform me if you get this, and another letter I wrote you, dated the 21st, which I am afraid of having been neglected to be put into the office.

So it was the Roselle you were to have gone in! I read your letter to-day, and reflected deeply on the ways of Heaven! To us they oft appear dark and doubtful; but let us do our duty faithfully, and sooner or later we will have our reward, because "the Lord God Omnipotent reigns:" every upright mind has here cause to rejoice. And now, adieu. May Almighty God bless you and yours! take you into His blessed favour here, and afterwards receive you into His glory! Farewell. I will ever, ever remain your *real* friend,

A. M.

No. XLVII.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE, EDINBURGH.

Autumn of 1792.

I SUPPOSE, my dear Madam, that by your neglecting to inform me of your arrival in Europe—a circumstance that could not be indifferent to me, as, indeed, no occurrence relating to you can—you meant to leave me to guess and gather that a correspondence I once had the honour and felicity to enjoy, is to be no more. Alas! what heavy-laden sounds are these—"No more!" The wretch who has never tasted pleasure, has never known woe; what drives the soul to madness, is the recollection of joys that are "no more!" But this is not language to the world: they do not understand it. But come, ye few—the children of Feeling and Sentiment! ye whose trembling bosom-chords ache to unutterable anguish, as recollection gushes on the heart! ye who are capable of an attachment, keen as the arrow of Death, and strong as the vigour of immortal being—come! and your ears shall drink a tale——But, hush! I must not, can not tell it; agony is in the recollection, and frenzy in the recital!

But, Madam, to leave the paths that lead to madness, I congratulate your friends on your return; and I hope that the precious health, which Miss P. tells me is so much injured, is restored, or restoring. There is a fatality attends Miss Peacock's correspondence and mine. Two of my letters, it seems, she never received; and her last came while I was in Ayrshire, was unfortunately mislaid, and only found about ten days or a fortnight ago, on removing a desk of drawers.

I present you a book: may I hope you will accept of it. I daresay you will have brought your books with you. The fourth volume of the "Scots Songs" is published; I will presume to send it you. Shall I hear from you?

* See vol. i. p. 192. † See vol. ii. p. 56. ‡ See vol. i. p. 193.

But first hear me. No cold language—no prudential documents: I despise advice, and scorn control. If you are not to write such language, such sentiments as you know I shall wish, shall delight to receive, I conjure you, by wounded pride! by ruined peace! by frantic, disappointed passion! by all the many ills that constitute that sum of human woes, a broken heart!!!—to me be silent for ever. . . . .

R. B.

No. XLVIII.

TO MRS. M'LEHOSE.

1793.

Before you ask me why I have not written you, first let me be informed by you *how* I shall write you? "In friendship," you say; and I have many a time taken up my pen to try an epistle of "friendship" to you; but it will not do: 'tis like Jove grasping a pop-gun, after having wielded his thunder. When I take up the pen, recollection ruins me. Ah! my ever dearest Clarinda! Clarinda! What a host of memory's tenderest offspring crowd on my fancy at that sound! But I must not indulge that subject. You have forbid it.

I am extremely happy to learn that your precious health is re-established, and that you are once more fit to enjoy that satisfaction in existence, which health alone can give. My old friend Ainslie has indeed been kind to you. Tell him that I envy him the power of serving you. I had a letter from him a while ago, but it was so dry, so distant, so like a card to one of his clients, that I could scarce bear to read it, and have not yet answered it. He is a good honest fellow, and *can* write a friendly letter, which would do equal honour to his head and his heart, as a whole sheaf of his letters which I have by me will witness; and though Fame does not blow her trumpet at my approach *now*, as she did *then*, when he first honoured me with his friendship, yet I am as proud as ever; and when I am laid in my grave, I wish to be stretched at my full length, that I may occupy every inch of ground I have a right to.

You would laugh were you to see me where I am just now. Would to Heaven you were here to laugh with me, though I am afraid that crying would be our first employment. Here am I set, a solitary hermit, in the solitary room of a solitary inn, with a solitary bottle of wine by me, as grave and as stupid as an owl, but like that owl, still faithful to my old song; in confirmation of which, my dear Mrs. Mac, here is your good health. May the hand-waled benisons o' Heaven bless your bonnie face; and the wratch wha skellies at your welfare, may the auld tinkler deil get him to clout his rotten heart! Amen.

You must know, my dearest Madam, that these now many years, wherever I am, in whatever company, when a married lady is called as a toast, I constantly give you; but, as your name has never passed my lips, even to my most intimate friend, I give you by the name of Mrs. Mac. This is so well known among my acquaintances, that when any married lady is called for, the toast-master will say—"O, we need not ask him who it is: here 's Mrs. Mac!" I have also, among my convivial friends, set on foot a round of toasts, which I call a round of Arcadian Shepherdesses; that is, a round of favourite ladies, under female names celebrated in ancient song; and then you are my Clarinda. So, my lovely Clarinda, I devote this glass of wine to a most ardent wish for your happiness.

> "In vain would Prudence, with decorous sneer,
> Point out a censuring world, and bid me fear:
> Above that world on wings of love I rise,
> I know its worst, and can that worst despise.
> 'Wrong'd, injured, shunned, unpitied, unredrest;
> The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest,'
> Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall,
> Clarinda, rich reward! o'erpays them all."

I have been rhyming a little of late, but I do not know if they are worth postage.

Tell me what you think of the following monody.

. . . . . .

The subject of the foregoing is a woman of fashion in this country, with whom at one period I was well acquainted.* By some scandalous conduct to me, and two or three other gentlemen here as well as me, she steered so far to the north of my good opinion, that I have made her the theme of several ill-natured things. The following epigram struck me the other day as I passed her carriage.

. . . . . .

R. B.

* Mrs. Riddell. See vol. i. p. 210.

BURNS' FIRST COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, &c., by Robert Burness; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature rational or irrational. As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature to see how a Ploughman thinks and feels, under the pressure of Love, Ambition, Anxiety, Grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the Modes and Manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, in all the Species.

"There are numbers in the world who do not want sense to make a figure, so much as an opinion of their own abilities to put them upon recording their observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those which appear in print."—Shenstone.

"Pleasing, when youth is long expired, to trace
The forms our pencil, or our pen, designed!
Such was our youthful air, and shape, and face,
Such the soft image of our youthful mind."—Ibid.

April, 1783.—Notwithstanding all that has been said against Love, respecting the folly and weakness it leads a young unexperienced mind into; still I think it, in a great measure, deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

August.—There is certainly some connection between Love, and Music, and Poetry; and therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of Nature, that passage in a modern love composition—

"As towards her cot he jogg'd along,
Her name was frequent in his song."

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet till I got once heartily in Love, and then Rhyme and Song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly; but I am always pleased with it, as it recalls to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the enchantment at an end.

"O once I lov'd a bonnie lass
Ay and I love her still," &c.*

* See vol. i. p. 1.

Lest my works should be thought below Criticism; or meet with a Critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favourable an eye; I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distich of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and on the other hand, the second distich is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little awkward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the Sex—the agreeables; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy lass. The third stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed, all in the strain of the second stanza, but the rest is mostly an expletive. The thoughts in the fifth stanza come finely up to my favourite idea, a sweet sonsy lass; the last line, however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth stanza; but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurts the whole. The seventh stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance.

September.—I entirely agree with that judicious philosopher Mr. Smith in his excellent Theory of Moral Sentiments, that Remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well under those calamities, in the procurement of which we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies or crimes have made us miserable and wretched, to bear up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct—is a glorious effort of Self-command.

"Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace;
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish," &c.*

March, 1784.—A penitential thought, in the hour of Remorse, intended for a tragedy—

"All devil as I am, a damned wretch;
A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting villain," &c. †

I have often observed in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, have something good about them, though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining them to this or that virtue; on this likewise depend a great many, no man can say how many of our vices; for this reason no man can say in what degree any person besides himself can be, with strict justice, called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many of his virtues are owing to constitution and education; how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but from want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped because he was out of the line of such temptation; and, what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest—how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all: I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay the faults and crimes of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.

I have often coveted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of *Blackguards*, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character; those who by thoughtless prodigality, or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin. Though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes "stained with guilt, and crimsoned o'er with crimes;" I have yet found among them, not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, Magnanimity, Generosity, disinterested Friendship, and even Modesty, in the highest perfection.

March, 1784.—There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened, and indeed effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy: in this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the Willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following:—

"O Thou Great Being! what Thou art
Surpasses me to know," &c. ‡

April.—As I am what the men of the world, if they knew of such a man, would call a whimsical Mortal; I have various sources of pleasure and enjoyment which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself, or some here and there such other out-of-the-way person. Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of Winter, more than the rest of the year. This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the—

"Mighty tempest and the hoary waste,
Abrupt and deep, stretch'd o'er the buried earth,"

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favourable to every thing great and noble. There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving o'er the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, "walks on the wings of the wind." In one of these seasons, just after a tract of misfortunes, I composed the following:—

"The wintry West extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw," &c. *

April.—The following Song is a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient in versification; but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over.

"My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O!
And carefully he bred me in decency and order, O," &c.†

April.—Shenstone observes finely that love-verses writ with out any real passion, are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of Love composition, except he himself, in one or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along a miserable dupe to Love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses and follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill in distinguishing *foppery* and *conceit* from real *passion* and *nature*. Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is *my own;* only I can say it was, at the time, *real*.

"Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows,
'Mang moors and mosses many, O," &c. ‡

April.—I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided in two grand classes, which I shall call the *grave* and the *merry;* though, by the bye, these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. There are, indeed, some exceptions; some part of the species who, according to my ideas of these divisions, come under neither of them; such are those individuals whom Nature turns off her hand, oftentimes, very like *blockheads*, but generally, on a nearer inspection, have some things surprisingly clever about them. They are more properly men of conceit than men of genius; men whose heads are filled, and whose faculties are engrossed by some whimsical notions in some art or science; so that they cannot think, nor speak with pleasure, on any other subject. Besides this pedantic species, Nature has always produced some mere insipid blockheads, who may be said to live a vegetable life in this world.

The *Grave* I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on by the love of money; and those whose darling wish is to make a figure in the world. The *Merry* are the men of pleasure of all denominations, the jovial lads who have too much fire and spirit to have any settled rule of action; but without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless, the careless, the indolent; and in particular *he* who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life—generally, indeed, in poverty and obscurity; but poverty and obscurity are only evils to him who can sit gravely down and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly, to grace the quorum, such are, generally, the men whose heads are capable of all the towering of genius, and whose hearts are warmed with the delicacy of feeling.

August.—The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men; but as I cannot please

* See vol. i. p. 19. † See vol. i. p. 4. ‡ See vol. i. p. 9.

* See vol. i. p. 8. † See vol. i. p. 12. ‡ See vol. i. p. 16.

myself in the arrangement of my ideas on the subject, I must wait till farther experience and nicer observations throw more light on the subject. In the mean time I shall set down the following fragment, which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the classes I belong to:—

"There 's nought but care on ev'ry han'
In every hour that passes, O," &c. *

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that BEING to whom we owe life, with every enjoyment that renders life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow creatures; that so by forming *piety* and *virtue* into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the pious and the good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave—I do not see that the turn of mind, and pursuits of such a one as the above verses describe—one who spends the hours and thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare with Ossian, Shakespeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne, &c., or as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a song to make or mend; and at all times some heart's-dear bonnie lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind and pursuits of such a one are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of piety and virtue, than the even lawful bustling and straining after the world's riches and honours; and I do not see but he may gain Heaven as well, which, by the bye, is no mean consideration, who steals through the vale of life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way, as he, who straining strait forward, perhaps spattering all about him, gains some of life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see and be seen a little more conspicuously, than what, in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term the poor, idolent, devil he has left behind him.

August.—A prayer, when fainting fits, and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threaten me, first put Nature on the alarm:—

"O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear," &c. †

August.—Misgivings in the hour of *Despondency* and prospect of *Death*.

"Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms," &c. ‡

Sept.—SONG.—(*Tune*, "Invercauld's Reel—Strathspey.")

"Yestreen I met you on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stour," &c. §

September.—SONG.—(*Tune*, "Black Jock.")

"My girl she 's airy, she 's buxom and gay;
Her breath is as sweet as the blossoms in May," &c. ‖

June, 1785.—John Barleycorn—A Song, to its own Tune.
I once heard the old song that goes by this name sung; and being very fond of it, and remembering only two or three verses of it, viz., the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, with some scraps which I have interwoven here and there in the following piece——

"There was three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high," &c. ¶

June.—The death and dying words o' poor Mailie—my ain pet ewe—an unco mournfu' tale.

"As Mailie and her lambs thegither
Were ae day nibbling on the tether," &c. *

June.—A letter sent to John Lapraik, near Muirkirk, a true, genuine, Scottish Bard.

"While briars an' woodbines budding green,
And paitricks scraichin loud at e'en," &c. †

On receiving an answer to the above I wrote the following—

"While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake,
An' pownies reek at plough or brake, &c. ‡

August.—A SONG—(*Tune*, "Peggy Bawn.")

"When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare," &c. §

August.—However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch Poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Ferguson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c., immortalized in such celebrated performances, whilst my dear native country, the ancient bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil, and particularly religious liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum; a country, the birthplace of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish History, particularly a great many of the actions of the GLORIOUS WALLACE, the SAVIOUR of his country: yet, we have never had one Scotch Poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the healthy, mountainous source, and winding sweep of Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but, alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius and education.

Obscure I am, and obscure I must be, though no young poet nor young soldier's heart ever beat more fondly for fame than mine.

"And if there is no other scene of being
Where my insatiate wish may have its fill;
This something at my heart that heaves for room,
My best, my dearest part, was made in vain."

August.—A Fragment—(*Tune*, "I had a horse, and I had nae mair.")

"When first I came to Stewart Kyle,
My mind it was nae steady," &c. ‖

August.—Hairst—A Fragment—(*Tune*, Foregoing).

"Now westlin winds and slaughtering guns
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather," &c. ¶

September.—There is a certain irregularity in the old Scotch Songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of accent and measure that the English poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously, with the respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old song of "The Mill, Mill, O," to give it a plain prosaic reading, it halts

* See vol. i. p. 17. † See vol. i. p. 10. ‡ See vol. i. p. 11.
§ See vol. i. p. 3. ‖ See vol. i. p. 23. ¶ See vol. i. p. 13.

* See vol. i. p. 13. † See vol. i. p. 33. ‡ See vol. i. p. 34.
§ See vol. i. p. 24. ‖ See vol. i. p. 23. ¶ See vol. i. p. 1.

prodigiously out of measure; on the other hand, the song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch songs, which begins "To Fanny fair could I impart," &c., it is most exact measure, and yet, let them be both sung before a real critic, one above the biasses of prejudice, but a thorough judge of nature—how flat and spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first. This particularly is the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables—and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even *like* rhyme, or sameness of jingle at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that, perhaps, it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness in some of these ancient fragments, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heartache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who, very probably, owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love with such fine strokes of nature, and, O mortifying to a bard's vanity, their very names are "buried 'mongst the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well! the last, the meanest of the *Muses' train*—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor, rustic *Bard unknown*, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love; he, too, has felt all the unfitness of a poetic heart for the struggle of a busy, bad world; he has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and worse than all, the loss of the woman he adored! Like you, all his consolation was his Muse: she taught him in rustic measures to complain. Happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the turf rest lightly on your bones! And may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesy and love!

September.—The following fragment is done something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scottish piece called "M'Millan's Peggy," and sings to the tune of "Galla Water." My "Montgomerie's Peggy" was my deity for six or eight months. She had been bred, though, as the world says, without any just pretence for it, in a style of life rather elegant; but as Vanburgh says in one of his comedies, my "dam'd star found me out" there too; for though I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or to tell the truth, what would scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, one day in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but, with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every alliance, except actual possession. I found out afterwards that what she told me of a pre-engagement was really true; but it cost some heartaches to get rid of the affair.

I have even tried to imitate, in this extempore thing, that irregularity in the rhyme, which, when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear.

"Although my bed were in yon muir,
Amang the heather, in my plaidie," &c. *

September.—Another fragment in imitation of an old Scotch song, well known among the country ingle sides—I cannot tell the name, neither of the song nor the tune, but they are in fine unison with one another. By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental that when one would compose to them, to "sowth the tune," as our Scotch phrase is, over and over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration, and raise the bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch poetry. I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the song and tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times.

Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse—

"When clouds in skies do come together
To hide the brightness of the sun,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
When a' thir storms are past and gone."

"Though fickle Fortune has deceived me,
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill," &c. †

The above was an extempore under the pressure of a heavy train of misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether. It was just at the close of that dreadful period mentioned page 314; and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since a "tempest brewing round me in the grim sky" of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will some time or other, perhaps ere long, overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell to pine in solitary, squallid wretchedness. However, as I hope my poor country Muse, who, all rustic, awkward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may even then learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and *sowth* a sang to sooth my misery.

'Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style. I am not musical scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter; but the following were the verses I composed to suit it:—

"O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low," &c. ‡

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole air.

October, 1785.—If ever any young man, on the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations; as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear bought experience. I have literally, like that great poet and great gallant, and, by consequence, that great fool, Solomon, "turned my eyes to behold madness and folly." Nay I have, with all the ardour of a lively, fanciful, and whimsical imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, poetic heart—shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity, . . .

* See vol. i. p. 5. † See vol. i. p. 11. ‡ See vol. i. p. 11.

BURNS' SECOND COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

[Until quite recently only a few extracts from this Common-place Book were believed to have been preserved (see vol. ii. p. 128), but in 1879, a few months after the death of the late Rev. George Gilfillan, it was announced that the entire journal had been for upwards of twenty years in the possession of Alexander Macmillan, Esq., publisher, London. It appeared during the year in *Macmillan's Magazine*, and we are now enabled, by the kind permission of the owner, to give it here in a complete form. As it consists to a considerable extent of transcripts of songs, &c., already given in this edition, we have only inserted their titles, with references to the pages where they are printed in full, except where they contain important variations.]

EDINBURGH, *April* 9, 1787.

As I have seen a good deal of human life in Edinburgh, a great many characters which are new to one bred up in the shades of life as I have been, I am determined to take down my remarks on the spot. Gray observes, in a letter of his to Mr. Palgrave, that "half a word fixed upon or near the spot, is worth a cart-load of recollection." I don't know how it is with the world in general, but with me, making remarks is by no means a solitary pleasure. I want some one to laugh with me; some one to be grave with me; some one to please me and help my discrimination with his or her own remark; and at times, no doubt, to admire my acuteness and penetration. The world are so busied with selfish pursuits, ambition, vanity, interest, or pleasure, that very few think it worth their while to make any observation on what passes around them; except where that observation is a sucker or branch of the darling plant they are rearing in their fancy. Nor am I sure, notwithstanding all the sentimental flights of novel writers, and the sage philosophy of moralists, if we are capable of so intimate and cordial a coalition of friendship as that one of us may pour out his bosom, his every thought and floating fancy, his very inmost soul, with unreserved confidence to another, without hazard of losing part of that respect man demands from man; or, from the unavoidable imperfections attending human nature, of one day repenting his confidence.

For these reasons I am determined to make these pages my *Confidant*. I will sketch every character that anyway strikes me, to the best of my observation, with unshrinking justice; I will take down insert anecdotes and take down remarks, in the old law phrase, without feud or favour: where I hit on anything clever my own applause will in some measure feast my vanity; and begging Patroclus' and Achates's pardon) I think a lock and key a security at least equal to the bosom of any friend whatever.

My own private story likewise, my amours, my rambles, the smiles and frowns of fortune on my bardship, my poems and fragments, that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted—in short, never did four shillings purchase so much friendship, since Confidence went first to market, or Honesty was set to sale.

To these seemingly invidious, but too just ideas of human friendship, I shall cheerfully and truly make one exception—the connection between two persons of different sex, when their interests are united or absorbed by the sacred tie of love—

"When thought meets thought ere from the lips it part,
And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart."

There confidence—confidence that exalts them the more in one another's opinion—confidence that endears them the more to one another's heart, unreservedly and luxuriantly "reigns and revels." But this is not my lot; and in my situation, if I am wise (which, by the bye, I have no great chance of being) my fate should be cast with the Psalmist's sparrow, "to watch alone on the house-tops." Oh, the pity!!!

A FRAGMENT—(*Tune*, "Daintie Davie.")*

THERE was a birkie born in Kyle,
But what na day o' what na style,
I doubt it 's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Davie.
Leeze me on thy curly pow,
Bonnie Davie, daintie Davie;
Leeze me on thy curly pow,
Thou 'se aye my daintie Davie.

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane
Was five an' twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel in on Davie.
Leeze me, &c.

The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo' she, wha lives 'll see the proof,
This walie boy will be nae coof,
I think we 'll ca' him Davie.
Leeze me, &c.

He 'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',
But aye a heart aboon them a';
He 'll gie his daddie's name a blaw,
We 'll a' be proud o' Davie.
Leeze me, &c.

But sure as three times three maks nine,
I see by ilka score an' line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me on thee, Davie.
Leeze me, &c.

* See vol. i. p. 38 for another version.

Guid faith, quo' she, I doubt you, Sir,
Ye 'll gar the lasses lie aspar,
But twenty faults ye may hae waur,
So blessins on thee, Davie.
Leeze me, &c.

There are few of the sore evils under the sun give me more uneasiness and chagrin than the comparison how a man of genius—nay, avowed worth—is everywhere received with the reception which a mere ordinary character, decorated with the trappings and futile distinctions of Fortune, meets. Imagine a man of abilities, his breast glowing with honest pride, conscious that men are born equal, still giving that "honour to whom honour is due;" he meets at a great man's table a Squire Something, or a Sir Somebody; he knows the noble landlord at heart gives the bard, or whatever he is, a share of his good wishes beyond any at table perhaps; yet how will it mortify him to see a fellow, whose abilities would scarcely have made an eight-penny tailor, and whose heart is not worth three farthings, meet with attention and notice that are forgot to the son of Genius and Poverty?

The noble Glencairn has wounded me to the soul here, because I dearly esteem, respect, and love him. He showed so much attention—engrossing attention one day to the only blockhead, as there was none but his lordship, the dunderpate, and myself, that I was within half a point of throwing down my gage of contemptuous defiance; but he shook my hand and looked so benevolently good at parting—God bless him! though I should never see him more, I shall love him until my dying day! I am pleased to think I am so capable of the throes of gratitude, as I am miserably deficient in some other virtues.

With Dr. Blair I am more at ease. I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare, or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle, and meets me on equal ground, my heart overflows with what is called *liking*. When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself with scarcely any emotion—What do I care for him or his pomp either?

It is not easy forming an exact-judging judgment of any one: but, in my opinion, Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof what industry and application can do. Natural parts like his are frequently to be met with—his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintances—but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first—the very first rank in prose; even in poesy, a good bard of Nature's making can only take the *pas* of him. He has a heart, not of the finest water, but far from being an ordinary one. In short, he is a truly worthy and most respectable character.

Mr. Greenfield is of a superior order. The bleedings of humanity, the generous resolve, a manly disregard of the paltry subjects of vanity, virgin modesty, the truest taste, and a very sound judgment, characterize him. His being the first speaker I ever heard is perhaps half owing to industry. He certainly possesses no small share of poetic abilities; he is a steady, most disinterested friend, without the least affectation of seeming so; and as a companion, his good sense, his joyous hilarity, his sweetness of manners and modesty, are most engagingly charming.

The most perfect character I ever saw is Mr. Stewart. An exalted judge of the human heart, and of composition. One of the very first public speakers, and equally capable of generosity as humanity. His principal discriminating feature is—from a mixture of benevolence, strength of mind, and manly dignity, he not only at heart values, but in his deportment and address bears himself to all the actors, high and low, in the drama of life, simply as they merit in playing their parts. Wealth, honours, all that is extraneous of the man, have no more influence with him than they will have at the Last Day. His wit, in the hour of social hilarity, proceeds almost to good-natured waggishness; and in telling a story he particularly excels.

The next character I shall mention—my worthy bookseller, Mr. Creech—is a strange, multiform character. His ruling passions of the left hand kind are extreme vanity, and something of the more harmless modifications of selfishness. The one, mixed as it often is with great goodness of heart, makes him rush into all public matters, and take every instance of unprotected merit by the hand, provided it is in his power to hand it into public notice; the other quality makes him, amid all the embarras in which his vanity entangles him, now and then to cast half a squint at his own interest. His parts as a man, his deportment as a gentleman, and his abilities as a scholar, are much above mediocrity. Of all the Edinburgh literati and wits he writes the most like a gentleman. He does not awe you with the profoundness of the philosopher, or strike your eye with the soarings of genius; but he pleases you with the handsome turn of his expression, and the polite ease of his paragraph. His social demeanour and powers, particularly at his own table, are the most engaging I have ever met with. On the whole he is, as I said before, a multiform, but an exceedingly respectable, worthy character.

The following poem is the work of some hapless unknown son of the Muses who deserved a better fate. There is a great deal of "The Voice of Cona" in his solitary, mournful notes; and had the sentiments been clothed in Shenstone's language they would have been no discredit even to that elegant poet.

ELEGY.

"Strait is the spot and green the sod,
From whence my sorrows flow:
And soundly rests the ever dear
Inhabitant below.

Pardon my transport, gentle Shade,
While o'er this turf I bow!
Thy earthly house is circumscrib'd,
And solitary now!

Not one poor stone to tell thy name,
Or make thy virtues known;
But what avails to me, to thee,
The sculpture of a stone?

I 'll sit me down upon this turf,
And wipe away this tear:
The chill blast passes swiftly by,
And flits around thy bier.

Dark is the dwelling of the Dead,
And sad their house of rest:
Low lies the head by Death's cold arm
In aweful fold embrac'd.

I saw the grim Avenger stand
Incessant by thy side;
Unseen by thee, his deadly breath
Thy lingering frame destroy'd.

Pale grew the roses on thy cheek,
And wither'd was thy bloom,
Till the slow poison brought thy youth
Untimely to the tomb.

Thus wasted are the ranks of men,
Youth, Health, and Beauty fall;
The ruthless ruin spreads around,
And overwhelms us all.

Behold where round thy narrow house
The graves unnumber'd lie!
The multitudes that sleep below
Existed but to die.

Some, with the tottering steps of Age,
Trode down the darksome way:
And some, in youth's lamented prime,
Like thee were torn away.

Yet these, however hard their fate,
Their native earth receives;
Amid their weeping friends they died,
And fill their father's graves.

From thy loved friends where first thy breath
Was taught by Heaven to flow:
Far, far removed, the ruthless stroke
Surprised and laid thee low.

At the last limits of our Isle,
Washed by the western wave,
Touched by thy fate, a thoughtful bard
Sits lonely on thy grave.

Pensive he eyes, before him spread,
The deep outstretch'd and vast;
His mourning notes are borne away
Along the rapid blast.

And while, amid the silent Dead,
Thy hapless fate he mourns;
His own long sorrows freshly bleed,
And all his grief returns.

Like thee cut off in early youth
And flower of beauty's pride,
His friend, his first and only joy,
His much loved Stella died.

Him too, the stern impulse of Fate
Resistless bears along;
And the same rapid tide shall whelm
The Poet and the Song.

The tear of pity which he shed,
He asks not to receive;
Let but his poor remains be laid
Obscurely in the grave.

His grief-worn heart, with truest joy,
Shall meet the welcome shock;
His airy harp shall lie unstrung
And silent on the rock.

O my dear maid, my Stella, when
Shall this sick period close,
And lead thy solitary Bard,
To his beloved repose?

ELLISLAND, *14th June*, 1788—*Sunday.*

This is now the third day I have been in this country. Lord, what is man! what a bustling little bundle of passions, appetites, ideas, and fancies! and what a capricious kind of existence he has here! If legendary stories be true, there is, indeed, an *elsewhere*, where, as Thomson says, "virtue sole survives."

"Tell us ye Dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?
. . . . . a little time
Will make us learn'd as you are, and as close."

I am such a coward in life, so tired of the service, that I would almost at any time, with Milton's Adam,

". . . gladly lay me in my Mother's lap,
And be at peace;"

but a wife and children—in poetics, "the fair partner of my soul, and the little dear pledges of our mutual love"—these bind me to struggle with the stream, till some chopping squall overset the silly vessel, or, in the listless return of years, its own craziness drive it a wreck. Farewell now to those giddy follies, those varnished vices, which though half sanctified by the bewitching levity of Wit and Humour, are at best but thriftless idling with the precious current of existence—nay, often poisoning the whole that, like the plains of Jericho, "the water is naught, and the ground barren;" and nothing short of a supernaturally gifted Elisha can ever after heal the evils.

Wedlock, the circumstance that buckles me hardest to care, if virtue and religion were to be anything with me but mere names—was what in a few seasons I must have resolved on; in the present case it was unavoidably necessary. Humanity, generosity, honest vanity of character, justice to my own happiness for after life, so far as it could depend (which it surely will a great deal) on internal peace—all these joined their warmest suffrages, their most powerful solicitations, with a rooted attachment, to urge the step I have taken. Nor have I any reason on her part to rue it. I can fancy *how*, but have never seen *where*, I could have made it better. Come then, let me return to my favourite motto, that glorious passage in Young—

"On Reason build Resolve—
That column of true majesty in man."

June 16, 1788.—Copy of a letter to Lord Buchan, in answer to a bombast epistle he sent me when I went first to Edinburgh.*

To the Earl of Eglinton on receiving ten guineas as his Lordship's subscription money.†

WRITTEN IN CARSE HERMITAGE.

"Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed," &c.‡

* See vol. ii. p. 123. † See vol. ii. p. 121.
‡ See vol. i. pp. 142, 148.

VERSICLES ON SIGN-POSTS.

The everlasting surliness of a lion, Saracen's head, &c., or the unchanging blandness of the landlord welcoming a traveller, on some sign-posts, would be no bad similes of the constant affected fierceness of a bully, or the eternal simper of a Frenchman or a fiddler.

. . . . . He looked
Just as your Sign-post lions do,
As fierce, and quite as harmless too.

Patient Stupidity.
So, heavy, passive to the tempest's shocks,
Strong on the Sign-post stands the stupid Ox.

His face with smile eternal drest,
Just like the landlord to his guest,
High as they hang with creaking din,
To index out the Country Inn.

A head, pure, sinless, quite of brain or soul,
The very image of a Barber's Poll;
Just shows a human face and wears a wig,
And looks, when well friseur'd, too amazing big.

TO ROBERT GRAHAM, OF FINTRY, Esq.

With a request for an Excise Division.—Ellisland, Sept. 8, 1788.

"When Nature her great master-piece designed,
And framed her last, best work, the human mind," &c. *

CASTLE GORDON—intended to be sung to "Morag."

"Streams that glide in orient plains,
Never bound by Winter's chains," &c. †

SCOTS BALLAD—(*Tune*, "Mary weep no more for me.")

"My heart is wae, and unco wae,
To think upon the raging sea," &c. †

SONG—(*Tune*, "Captain O'Kean.")

"The small birds rejoice in the green leaves returning,
The murmuring streamlet winds clear thro' the vale," &c. §

EXTEMPORE—TO MR. GAVIN HAMILTON.

"To you, sir, this summons I 've sent,
Pray whip till the pownie is fraething." &c. ‖

TO THE NIGHTINGALE—ON HER LEAVING E. C., 1784.

BY MRS. DR. HUNTER, LONDON.

"Why from these shades, sweet bird of eve,
Art thou to other regions wildly fled?
Thy pensive song would oft my cares relieve,
Thy melancholy softness oft would shed
Peace on my weary soul, return again,
Return, and sadly sweet, in soothing notes complain.

At the still hour I 'll come alone,
And listen to thy lovelorn trembling lay,
Or by the moon's beam on some mossy stone
I 'll sit, and watch thy wing from spray to spray;
Then when the swelling cadence slow shall rise,
I 'll join the plaintive strain in lowly murmuring sighs.

Ah, simple bird, where art thou flown!
What distant woodland now receives thy nest?
What distant echo answers to thy moan?
What distant thorn supports thy panting breast?
Who e'er shall feel thy melting woes like me,
Or pay thee for thy song with such true sympathy?"

A SONNET IN THE MANNER OF PETRARCH.

BY THE SAME.

"Come tender thoughts, with twilight's pensive gloom,
Soften remembrance, mitigate despair,
And cast a gleam of comfort o'er the tomb.

Methinks again the days and years return
When joy was young, and careless fancy smiled,
When hope with promises the heart beguiled
When love illumed the world, and happiness was born.
Where are ye fled, dear moments of delight!
And thou, O best beloved! alas, no more
The future can the faded past restore,
Wrapped in the shades of Time's eternal night.
For me remains alone, through ling'ring years,
The melancholy Muse, companion of my tears."

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE WITH A SHOT.—*April*, 1789. *

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes or verdant plains
To thee a home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek mangled innocent, some wonted form,
That wonted form, alas! thy dying bed;
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy blood-stained bosom warm.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;
The playful pair crowd fondly by thy side;
Ah! helpless nurslings, who will now provide
That life a mother only can bestow?

* The above was sent to Mr. Alexander Cunningham, accompanied by a letter. See General Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 192. See vol. i. p. 154 for another version.

* See vol. i. p. 145. † See vol. i. p. 127. ‡ See vol. i. p. 124. § See vol. i. p. 141. ‖ See vol. i. p. 99.

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I 'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the worthless wretch, and mourn thy hapless fate.

ON SEEING A FELLOW WOUND A HARE—SPRING, 1789.

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye;
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bitter little that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed;
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;
The playful pair espy thee o'er the plain;
Ah hapless nurslings! who will now sustain
Your little lives, or shield you from the foe!

Oft as by winding Nith I, musing, wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I 'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.

TO MR. GRAHAM OF FINTRY,

ON BEING APPOINTED TO MY EXCISE DIVISION.

"I call no goddess to inspire my strains,
A fabled Muse may suit a bard that feigns," &c. *

SONG—(*Tune*, "Ewe buchts, Marion.")

"Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave old Scotia's shore?" &c. †

ELEGY ON CAPT. MATTHEW HENDERSON,

A GENTLEMAN WHO HELD THE PATENT FOR HIS HONOURS IMMEDIATELY FROM ALMIGHTY GOD.

"O Death! thou tyrant fell and bloody!
The meike devil wi' a woodie," &c. ‡

EPITAPH ON ROBERT FERGUSSON.

"No pageant bearings here, nor pompous lay,
No storied urn nor animated bust," &c. §

TO THE HONOURABLE THE BAILIES OF THE CANONGATE, EDINBURGH. ||

* See vol i. p. 191. † See vol. ii. p. 25. ‡ See vol i. p. 178.
§ See vol. i. p. 115. || See vol. ii. p. 121.

REMARKS

ON

SCOTTISH SONGS AND BALLADS.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE MORE INTERESTING OF THE REMARKS WRITTEN BY BURNS IN AN INTERLEAVED COPY OF JOHNSON'S MUSICAL MUSEUM, PRESENTED BY HIM TO CAPTAIN RIDDEL OF GLENRIDDEL.

The Highland Queen.—(*Museum No.* 1.)

Both music and poetry were composed by a Mr. M'Vicar, purser of the Solway man of war. This I had from Dr. Blacklock.

Bess the Gawkie.—(*Museum No.* 4.)

The song shows that the Scottish Muses did not all leave us when we lost Ramsay and Oswald, as I have good reason to believe that the verses and music are both posterior to the days of these two gentlemen. It is a beautiful song, and in the genuine Scots taste. We have few pastoral compositions —I mean the pastoral of Nature—that are equal to this.

Lord Gregory.—(*Museum No.* 5.)

It is somewhat singular that, in Lanark, Renfrew, Ayr, Wigton, Kircudbright, and Dumfries Shires, there is scarcely an old song or tune which, from the title, &c., can be guessed to belong to, or be the production of, these counties. This, I conjecture, is one of these very few; as the ballad, which is a long one, is called, both by tradition and in printed collections, "The Lass o' Lochroyan," which I take to be Lochroyan in Galloway.

The Banks of the Tweed.—(*Museum No.* 6.)

This song is one of the many attempts that English composers have made to imitate the Scottish manner, and which I shall, in these strictures, beg leave to distinguish by the appellation of Anglo-Scottish productions. The music is pretty good, but the verses are just above contempt.

The Beds of Sweet Roses.—(*Museum No.* 7.)

This song, as far as I know, for the first time appears here in print. When I was a boy, it was a very popular song in Ayrshire. I remember to have heard those fanatics, the Buchanites, sing some of their nonsensical rhymes, which they dignify with the name of hymns, to this air.

Roslin Castle.—(*Museum No.* 8.)

These verses were the production of Richard Hewit, a young man that Dr. Blacklock, to whom I am indebted for the anecdote, kept for some years as an amanuensis. I do not know who is the author of the second song to the tune. Tytler, in his amusing history of Scots music, gives the air to Oswald; but in Oswald's own collection of Scots tunes, where he affixes an asterisk to those he himself composed, he does not make the least claim to the tune.

Saw Ye Johnnie Comin? Quo She.—(*Museum No.* 9.)

This song, for genuine humour in the verses, and lively originality in the air, is unparalleled. I take it to be very old.

Saw Ye Nae My Peggy.—(*Museum No.* 11.)

This charming song is much older, and indeed superior to, Ramsay's verses "The Toast," as he calls them. There is another set of the words, much older still, and which I take to be the original one, but though it has a very great deal of merit it is not quite ladies' reading.

The original words, for they can scarcely be called verses, seem to be as follows; a song familiar from the cradle to every Scottish ear.

"Saw ye my Maggie, saw ye my Maggie,
Saw ye my Maggie linkin' o'er the lea?
High kilted was she, high kilted was she,
High kilted was she, the coat aboon her knee.

What mark has your Maggie? what mark has your Maggie?
What mark has your Maggie, that I may ken her by?" &c.

Though it by no means follows that the silliest verses to an air must, for that reason, be the original song; yet I take this ballad, of which I have quoted part, to be the old verses. The two songs in Ramsay, one of them evidently his own, are never to be met with in the fireside circle of our peasantry; while that which I take to be the old song, is in every shepherd's mouth. Ramsay, I suppose, had thought the old verses unworthy of a place in his collection.

The Flowers of Edinburgh.—(*Museum No.* 13.)

This song is one of the many effusions of Scots Jacobitism. The title, "The Flowers of Edinburgh," has no manner of connexion with the present verses; so I suspect there has been an older set of words, of which the title is all that remains.

By the bye, it is singular enough that the Scottish Muses were all Jacobites. I have paid more attention to every description of Scots songs than perhaps any body living has done, and I do not recollect one single stanza, or even the title of the most trifling Scots air, which has the least panegyrical reference to the families of Nassau or Brunswick; while there are hundreds satirizing them. This may be thought no panegyric on the Scots poets; but I mean it as such. For myself, I would always take it as a compliment to have it said that my heart ran before my head—and surely the gallant though unfortunate house of Stewart, the kings of our fathers for so many heroic ages, is a theme much more interesting than . . .

Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' S'trae.—(*Museum No.* 16.)

It is self-evident that the first four lines of this song are part of a song more ancient than Ramsay's beautiful verses which are annexed to them. As music is the language of Nature, and poetry, particularly songs, are less or more localized (if I may be allowed the verb) by some of the modifications of time and place, this is the reason why so many of our Scots airs have outlived their original, and perhaps many subsequent sets of verses; except a single name, or phrase, or sometimes one or two lines, simply to distinguish the tunes by.

To this day, among people who know nothing of Ramsay's verses, the following is the song, and all the song that ever I heard:—

"Gin ye meet a bonnie lassie,
Gie her a kiss and let her gae:
But gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae.
Fye, gae rub her, rub her, rub her,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae:
An' gin ye meet a dirty hizzie,
Fye, gae rub her o'er wi' strae."

The Lass o' Livingston.—(*Museum No.* 17.)

The old song, in three eight-line stanzas, is well known, and has merit as to wit and humour; but is rather unfit for insertion. It begins:—

"The bonnie Lass o' Liviston,
Her name ye ken, her name ye ken,
And she has written in her contract,
To lie her lane, to lie her lane."

The last time I came o'er the Moor.—(*Museum No.* 18.)

Ramsay found the first line of this song, which had been preserved as the title of the charming air, and then composed the rest of the verses to suit that line. This has always a finer effect than composing English words, or words with an idea foreign to the spirit of the old title. Where old titles of songs convey any idea at all, it will generally be found to be quite in the spirit of the air.

The Lass o' Patie's Mill.—(*Museum No.* 20.)

In Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland this song is localized (a verb I must use for want of another to express my idea) somewhere in the North of Scotland, and it is likewise claimed by Ayrshire. The following anecdote I had from the present Sir William Cunningham of Robertland, who had it from the last John, Earl of Loudoun. The then Earl of Loudoun—father to the Earl John before mentioned, had Ramsay at Loudoun, and one day walking together by the banks of Irvine water, near Newmills, at a place yet called "Patie's Mill," they were struck with the appearance of a beautiful country girl. His lordship observed that she would be a fine theme for a song. Allan lagged behind in returning to Loudoun Castle, and at dinner produced this identical song.

The Highland Laddie.—(*Museum No.* 21.)

As this was a favourite theme with our later Scottish Muses, there are several airs and songs of that name. That which I take to be the oldest is to be found in this "Museum" (No. 332), beginning "I hae been at Crookie-den." One reason for my thinking so is that Oswald has it in his collection by the name of "The Auld Highland Laddie." It is also known by the name of "Jinglin John," which is a well-known song of four or five stanzas, and seems to be earlier than Jacobite times. As a proof of this, it is little known to the peasantry by the name of "Highland Laddie;" while every body knows "Jinglin Johnnie." That song begins:—

"Jinglin John, the meikle man,
He met a lass was blythe and bonnie."

Another "Highland Laddie" is also in the "Museum," vol. v. (No. 467), which I take to be Ramsay's original, as he has borrowed the chorus, "O my bonnie Highland lad," &c. It consists of three stanzas, besides the chorus, and has humour in its composition. It is an excellent, but somewhat licentious song, beginning:—

"As I cam o'er the Cairney Mount,
And down among the blooming heather."

This air, and the common "Highland Laddie," seem to be only different sets.

Another "Highland Laddie," also in the "Museum," vol. v. (No. 468), is the tune of several Jacobite fragments. One of these old songs to it only exists, as far as I know, in these four lines:—

"Whare hae ye been a' day,
Bonnie laddie, Highland laddie?
Down the back o' Bell's brae,
Courtin Maggie, courtin Maggie."

Another of this name is Dr. Arne's beautiful air (No. 22, vol. ii.), called the "New Highland Laddie."

The Turnimspike.—(*Museum No.* 23.)

There is a stanza in this excellent song for local humour, omitted in this set—where I have placed the asterisms (between the ninth and tenth verses).

"They tak the horse then by the head,
And there they make him stand, man;
Me tell them, me hae seen the day
They no had sic command, man."

A tradition is mentioned in "The Bee," that the second Bishop Chisholm, of Dunblane, used to say, that if he was going to be hanged, nothing would soothe his mind so much by the way as to hear "Clout the Caldron" played.

I have met with another tradition, that the old song to this tune,

"Ha'e ye ony pots or pans,
Or ony broken chandlers,"

was composed on one of the Kenmure family in the cavalier times; and alluded to an amour he had, while under hiding, in the disguise of an itinerant tinker. The air is also known by the name of "The Blacksmith and his apron," which, from the rhythm, seems to have been a line of some old song to the tune.

Auld Lang Syne.—(*Museum No.* 25.)

Ramsay here, as usual with him, has taken the idea of the song, and the first line, from the old fragment, which will appear in the "Museum," vol. v.

Johnnie's Grey Breeks.—(*Museum No.* 26.)

To sing such a beautiful air to such execrable verses (as "The Gentle Swain") is downright prostitution of common sense! The Scots verses indeed are tolerable.

Though this has certainly every evidence of being a Scottish air, yet there is a well-known tune and song in the north of Ireland, called "The Weaver and his shuttle, O," which, though sung much quicker, is every note the very same tune.

He stole my tender heart away.—(*Museum No.* 28.)

This is an Anglo-Scottish production, but by no means a bad one.

Fairest of the Fair.—(*Museum No.* 32.)

It is too barefaced to take Dr. Percy's charming song, and by the means of transposing a few English words into Scots, to offer to pass it for a Scots song. I was not acquainted with the Editor until the first volume was nearly finished, else, had I known in time, I would have prevented such an impudent absurdity.

The Blathrie O't.—(*Museum No.* 33.)

The following is a set of this song, which was the earliest song I remember to have got by heart. When a child, an old woman sung it to me, and I picked up every word at first hearing.

O Willy, weel I mind, I lent you my hand,
To sing you a song which you then did demand;
But my memory 's so bad, I had a'maist forgot,
That you called it "the gear an' the blathrie o't."

I 'll sing not of confusion, delusion, or pride,
I 'll sing about a laddie was for a virtuous bride;
For virtue is an ornament that time will never rot,
And preferable to gear an' the blathrie o't.

Tho' my lassie hae nae scarlets nor silks to put on,
We envy not the greatest that sits upon a throne;
I wad rather hae my lassie, tho' she cam in her smock,
Than a princess wi' the gear an' the blathrie o't.

Tho' we hae nae horses nor menyie at command
We will toil on our fit, and we 'll work wi' our hand;
And when wearied, then our rest will be sweet in any spot,
And we 'll value not the gear and the blathrie o't.

If we hae ony babies, we 'll reckon them as lent;
Hae we less, hae we mair, we will aye be content;
For the cottar has mair pleasure in the winnin o' a groat,
Than the miser wi' his gear and the blathrie o't.

We' ll fash not the affairs o' the kirk or the queen,
They 're nae matters for a sang, let them sink, let them swim;
On your kirk I 'll ne'er encroach, but I 'll hold it still remote,
Sae take this for "the gear and the blathrie o't."

Dainty Davie.—(*Museum No.* 34.)

This song, tradition says, and the composition itself confirms it, was composed on the Rev. David Williamson's getting the daughter of Lady Cherrytrees with child, while a party of dragoons were searching the house to apprehend him for being an adherent to the solemn league and covenant. The pious woman had put a lady's night-cap on him, and had laid him a-bed with her own daughter, and passed him to the soldiery as a lady, her daughter's bed-fellow. A mutilated stanza or two are to be found in Herd's collection, but the original song consists of five or six stanzas, and were their delicacy equal to their wit and humour, they would merit a place in any collection. The first stanza is—

"Being pursued by the dragoons,
Within my bed he was laid down;
And weel I wat, he was worth his room,
For he was my dainty Davie."

Ramsay's song "Lucky Nancy," though he calls it an old song with additions, seems to be all his own except the chorus—

"I was aye telling you,
Lucky Nancy, lucky Nancy,
Auld springs wad ding the new
But ye would never trow me."

which I should conjecture to be part of a song prior to the affair of Williamson.

May Eve, or Kate of Aberdeen.—(*Museum No.* 35.)

"Kate of Aberdeen" is, I believe, the work of poor Cunningham the player; of whom the following anecdote, though told before, desires a recital. A fat dignitary of the church coming past Cunningham on Sunday as the poor poet was plying a fishing rod in some stream near Durham, his reverence reprimanded Cunningham very severely for such an occupation on such a day. The poor poet, with that inoffensive gentleness of manner which was his peculiar characteristic, replied that he hoped God and his reverence would forgive his seeming profanity of that sacred day, "as he had no dinner to eat but what lay at the bottom of that pool." This, Mr. Woods the player, who knew Cunningham well and esteemed him much, assured me was true.

Tweedside.—(*Museum No.* 36.)

In Ramsay's "Tea-table Miscellany," he tells us that about thirty of the songs in that publication were the works of some young gentleman of his acquaintance; which songs are marked with the letters D. C., &c. Old Mr. Tytler of Woodhouselee, the worthy and able defender of the beauteous Queen of Scots, told me that the songs marked C. in the "Tea-table," were the composition of a Mr. Crawford, of the house of Auchinames, who was afterwards unfortunately drowned coming from France. As Tytler was most intimately acquainted with Allan Ramsay, I think the anecdote may be depended on. Of consequence the beautiful song of "Tweedside" is Mr. Crawford's, and indeed does great honour to his poetical talents. He was a Robert Crawford; the Mary he celebrates was a Mary Stewart, of the Castle-Milk family, afterwards married to a Mr. Ritchie.

I have seen a song, calling itself the "Original Tweedside," and said to have been composed by a Lord Yester. It consisted of two stanzas, of which I recollect the first:—

"When Maggie and I was acquaint,
I carried my noddle fu' high;
Nae lintwhite on a' the green plain,
Nor gowdspink so happy as I;
But I saw her sae fair, and I lo'ed;
I woo'd, but I cam nae great speed;
So now I maun wander abroad,
And lay my banes far frae the Tweed."

Mary's Dream.—(*Museum No.* 37.)

The Mary here alluded to is generally supposed to be Miss Mary M'Ghie, daughter to the Laird of Airds, in Galloway. The poet was a Mr. (John) Lowe, who likewise wrote another beautiful song, called "Pompey's Ghost." I have seen a poetic epistle from him in North America, where he now is, or lately was, addressed to a lady in Scotland. By the strain of the verses it appeared that they allude to some love disappointment.

The Maid that tends the Goats.—(*Museum No.* 40.)

Mr. Dudgeon (the author of this song) is a respectable farmer's son in Berwickshire.

I wish my Love were in a Mire.—(*Museum No.* 41.)

I never heard more of the words of this old song than the title.

Allan Water.—(*Museum No.* 43.)

This Allan Water (which the composer of the music has honoured with the name of the air), I have been told, is Allan Water in Strathallan. (See vol. ii. p. 51).

There 's nae luck about the House.—(*Museum No.* 44.)

This is one of the most beautiful songs in the Scots, or any language. The lines

"And will I see his face again,
And will I hear him speak!"

as well as the two preceding ones, are unequalled almost by anything I ever heard or read; and the lines,

"The present moment is our ain,
The neist we never saw,"

are worthy of the first poet. It is long posterior to Ramsay's days. About the year 1771, or 1772, it came first on the streets as a ballad; and I suppose the composition of the song was not much anterior to that period.

Tarry Woo.—(*Museum No.* 45.)

This is a very pretty song; but I fancy that the first half stanza, as well as the tune itself, are much older than the rest of the words.

Gramachree.—(*Museum No.* 46.)

This song was composed by Mr. Poe, a counsellor-at-law in Dublin. This anecdote I had from a gentleman who knew the lady—the "Molly"—who is the subject of the song, and to whom Mr. Poe sent the first manuscript of his most beautiful verses. I do not remember any single line that has more true pathos than

"How can she break that honest heart, that wears her in its core!"

but as the song is Irish, it had nothing to do in this collection.

The Collier's Bonnie Lassie.—(*Museum No.* 47.)

The first half stanza is much older than the days of Ramsay. The old words began thus:—

"The collier has a dochter, and O she 's wonder-bonnie!
A laird he was that sought her, rich baith in lands and money;
She wadna hae a laird, nor wad she be a lady;
But she wad hae a collier, the colour o' her daddie."

My ain kind Deary, O.—(*Museum No.* 49.)

The old words of this song are omitted here, though much more beautiful than those inserted, which were mostly composed by poor Fergusson, in one of his merry humours. The old words began thus:—

"I 'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind deary, O,
I 'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind deary, O.
Altho' the night were ne'er sae wat,
And I were ne'er sae weary, O,
I 'll rowe thee o'er the lea-rig,
My ain kind deary, O."

Blink o'er the burn, sweet Betty.—(*Museum No.* 51.)

The old words, all that I remember, are—

"Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,
'Tis a cauld winter night;
It rains, it hails, it thunders,
The moon she gi'es nae light;
It 's for the sake o' sweet Betty,
That e'er I tint my way;
Sweet, let me lie beyond thee,
Until the break o' day.

O Betty will bake my bread,
And Betty will brew my ale,
And Betty will be my love,
When I come over the dale:
Blink over the burn, sweet Betty,
Blink over the burn to me,
And while I hae life, dear lassie,
My ain sweet Betty thou 'se be."

The Blythsome Bridal.—(*Museum No.* 58.)

I find the "Blythsome Bridal" in James Watson's collection of Scots poems, printed at Edinburgh in 1716. This collection, the publisher says, "is the first of its nature which has been published in our native Scots dialect." It is now extremely scarce.

Tradition, in the western parts of Scotland, tells us that the old song, "An the Kirk wad let me be" (of which there are still two stanzas extant), once saved a covenanting clergyman out of a scrape. It was a little prior to the Revolution—a period when being a Scots Covenanter was being a felon—that one of the clergy who was at that time hunted by the merciless soldiery, fell in, by accident, with a party of the military. The soldiers were not exactly acquainted with the person of the reverend gentleman of whom they were in search; but from some suspicious circumstances they fancied that they had got one of that cloth and opprobrious persuasion among them, in the person of this stranger. *Mass John*, to extricate himself, assumed a freedom of manners very unlike the gloomy strictness of his sect; and, among other convivial exhibitions, sung (and some traditions say *composed* on the spur of the occasion) "Kirk wad let me be" with such effect, that the soldiers swore he was a d——d honest fellow, and that it was impossible he could belong to those hellish conventicles; and so gave him his liberty.

The first stanza of this song, a little altered, is a favourite kind of dramatic interlude acted at country weddings, in the south-west parts of the kingdom. A young fellow is dressed up like an old beggar; a peruke, commonly made of carded tow, represents the hoary locks; an old bonnet; a ragged plaid, or surtout, bound with a straw-rope for a girdle; a pair of old shoes, with straw-ropes twisted round the ancles, as is done by shepherds in snowy weather; his face they disguise as like wretched old age as they can: in this plight he is brought into the wedding-house, frequently to the astonishment of strangers who are not in the secret, and begins to sing—

"I am a silly old man,
My name is Auld Glenae," &c.

He is asked to drink, and by and by to dance, which, after some uncouth excuses, he is prevailed on to do, the fiddler playing the tune (which here is commonly called "Auld Glenae;") in short, he is all the time so plied with liquor that he is understood to get intoxicated, and with all the ridiculous gesticulations of an old drunken beggar, he dances and staggers until he falls on the floor; yet still in all his riot, nay, in his rolling and tumbling on the floor, with one or other drunken motion of his body, he beats time to the music, till at last he is supposed to be carried out *dead drunk*.

Sae merry as we twa hae been.—(*Museum No.* 59.)

This song is beautiful. The chorus in particular is truly pathetic. I never could learn anything of its author.

"Sae merry as we twa hae been,
Sae merry as we twa hae been;
My heart it is like for to break
When I think on the days we hae seen."

John Hay's Bonnie Lassie.—(*Museum No.* 67.)

She was the daughter of John Hay, Earl, or Marquis of Tweeddale, and late Countess-dowager of Roxburgh. She died at Broomlands, near Kelso, sometime between the years of 1720 and 1740.

The Bonnie Bracket Lassie.—(*Museum No.* 68.)

The idea of this song is to me very original; the first two lines are all of it that is old. The rest of the song, as well as those songs in the "Museum" marked T, are the works of an obscure, tippling, but extraordinary body of the name of Tytler, commonly known by the name of "Balloon Tytler," from his having projected a balloon; a mortal, who, though he drudges about Edinburgh as a common printer, with leaky shoes, a sky-lighted hat, and knee-buckles as unlike as George-by-the-grace-of-God and Solomon-the-Son-of-David; yet that same unknown, drunken mortal is author and compiler of three-fourths of Elliot's pompous Encyclopedia Britannica, which he composed at half a guinea a week.

Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow.—(*Museum No.* 73.)

Mr. Robertson, in his statistical account of the parish of Selkirk, says that Mary Scott, the Flower of Yarrow, was descended from the Dryhope, and married into the Harden family. Her daughter was married to a predecessor of the present Sir Francis Elliot of Stobbs, and of the late Lord Heathfield.

There is a circumstance in their contract of marriage that merits attention, as it strongly marks the predatory spirit of the times. The father-in-law agrees to keep his daughter for some time after the marriage; for which the son-in-law binds himself to give him the profits of the first Michaelmas moon!

Down the Burn, Davie.—(*Museum No.* 74.)

I have been informed that the tune of "Down the burn, Davie," was the composition of David Maigh, keeper of the blood slough hounds belonging to the Laird of Riddell, in Tweeddale.

The Bush aboon Traquair.—(*Museum No.* 80.)

This is another beautiful song of Mr. Crawford's composition. In the neighbourhood of Traquair, tradition still shows the "Old Bush," which, when I saw it in the year 1787, was composed of eight or nine ragged birches. The Earl of Traquair has planted a clump of trees near by, which he calls the "New Bush."

She rose and let me in.—(*Museum No.* 83.)

The old set of this song, which is still to be found in printed collections, is much prettier than this; but somebody (I believe it was Ramsay) took it into his head to clear it of some seeming indelicacies, and made it at once more chaste and more dull.

Go to the Ewe-bughts, Marion.—(*Museum No.* 85.)

I am not sure if this old and charming air be of the South, as is commonly said, or of the North of Scotland. There is a

song, apparently as ancient as "Ewe-bughts, Marion," which sings to the same tune, and is evidently of the North. It begins thus:—

"The Lord o' Gordon had three dochters,
Mary, Marget, and Jean,
They wad na stay at bonnie Castle Gordon,
But awa to Aberdeen."

Lewis Gordon.—(*Museum No.* 86.)

This air is a proof how one of our Scots tunes comes to be composed out of another. I have one of the earliest copies of the song, and it has prefixed—"Tune of Tarry Woo;" of which tune a different set has insensibly varied into a different air. To a Scots critic, the pathos of the line,

"Tho' his back be at the wa',"

must be very striking. It needs not a Jacobite prejudice to be affected with this song. The supposed author of the song was a Mr. Geddes, priest at Shenval, in the Ainzie.

The Waukin' o' the Fauld.—(*Museum No.* 87.)

There are two stanzas still sung to this tune which I take to be the original song, whence Ramsay composed his beautiful song of that name in the Gentle Shepherd. It begins—

"O will ye speak at our town.
As ye come frae the fauld."

I regret that, as in many of our old songs, the delicacy of the old fragment is not equal to its wit and humour.

Oh ono Chrio.—(*Museum No.* 89.)

Dr. Blacklock informed me that this song was composed on the infamous massacre of Glencoe.

I'll never Leave Thee.—(*Museum No.* 91.)

This is another of Crawford's songs, but I do not think in his happiest manner. What an absurdity to join such names as Adonis and Mary together!

Corn Rigs are Bonnie.—(*Museum No.* 93.)

All the old words that ever I could meet with to this air were the following, which seem to have been an old chorus.

"O corn rigs and rye rigs,
O corn rigs are bonnie;
And whene'er you meet a bonnie lass,
Preen up her cockernony."

The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre.—(*Museum No.* 86.)

The chorus of this song is old; the rest is the work of "Balloon Tytler."

Bide ye Yet.—(*Museum No.* 97.)

There is a beautiful song to this tune beginning "Alas! my son, you little know," which is the composition of a Miss Jenny Graham, of Dumfries.

Tranent Muir.—(*Museum No.* 102.)

Composed by a Mr. Skirving, a very worthy, respectable farmer, near Haddington. I have heard the anecdote often that Lieutenant Smith, whom he satirises in the ninth stanza, came to Haddington after the publication of the song, and sent a challenge to Skirving to meet him there, and answer for the unworthy manner in which he had noticed him in the song. "Gang awa back," said the honest farmer, "and tell Mr. Smith that I hae nae leisure to come to Haddington; but tell him to come here, and I'll tak a leuk o' him; and if I think I'm fit to fecht him, I'll fecht him; and if no, I'll do as he did—I'll rin awa!"

To the Weaver's gin ye go.—(*Museum No.* 103.)

The chorus of this song is old, the rest of it is mine. Here, once for all, let me apologise for many silly compositions of mine in this work. Many beautiful airs wanted words; in the hurry of other avocations, if I could string a parcel of rhymes together anything near tolerable, I was fain to let them pass. He must be an excellent poet indeed, whose every performance is excellent.

I'm o'er Young to Marry yet.—(*Museum No.* 107.)

The chorus of this song is old. The rest of it—such as it is—is mine. (See vol. ii. p. 9).

Love is the cause of my Mourning.—(*Museum No.* 109.)

The words of "The Shepherd's Complaint" are by a Mr. R. Scott, from the town or neighbourhood of Biggar.

My Jo, Janet.—(*Museum No.* 111.)

Johnson, the publisher, with a foolish delicacy, refused to insert the last stanza of this humorous ballad, which Ramsay printed entire in the "Tea-table Miscellany:"—

"My spinnin wheel is auld and stiff,
The rock o 't winna stand, sir;
To keep the temper-pin in tiff,
Requires right aft my hand, sir;
Mak the maist o 't that ye can,
Janet, Janet,
But like it never wale a man,
My Jo, Janet!"

The Birks of Aberfeldy.—(*Museum No.* 113.)

I composed these stanzas, standing under the falls of Aberfeldy, at or near Moness. (See vol. i. p. 122).

The Highland Lassie, O.—(*Museum No.* 117.)

This was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was known at all in the world. My "Highland Lassie" was a warm-hearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love. After a pretty long tract of the most ardent reciprocal attachment, we met by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot by the Banks of Ayr, where we spent the day in taking farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of Autumn following she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to the grave in a few days, before I could even hear of her illness.

Were na my heart light, I would die.—(*Museum No.* 121.)

Lord Hailes, in his notes to his collection of Scots poems, says that this song was the composition of a Lady Grisell Baillie, daughter of the first Earl of Marchmont, and wife of George Baillie of Jerviswood.

The Young Man's Dream.—(*Museum No.* 126.)

This song is a composition of "Balloon Tytler."

Strathallan's Lament.—(*Museum No.* 132.)

This air is the composition of one of the worthiest and best-hearted men living, Allan Masterton, Schoolmaster in Edinburgh. As he and I were both sprouts of Jacobitism, we agreed to dedicate the words and air to that cause. But to tell the matter of fact, except when my passions were heated by some accidental cause, my Jacobitism was merely by way of *vive la bagatelle*.

What will I do gin my Hoggie die?—(*Museum No.* 133.)

Dr. Walker, who was Minister in Moffat in 1772, and is now (1791) Professor of Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, told the following anecdote concerning this air. He said that some gentlemen, riding a few years ago through Liddesdale, stopped at a hamlet consisting of a few houses, called Mosspaul (in Ewesdale); when they were struck with this tune, which an old woman, spinning on a rock at her door, was singing. All she could tell concerning it was, that she was taught it when a child, and it was called "What will I do gin my Hoggie die?" No person, except a few females at Mosspaul, knew this fine old tune; which in all probability would have been lost, had not one of the gentlemen, who happened to have a flute with him, taken it down. (See vol. ii. p. 9).

Up in the Morning Early.—(*Museum No.* 140.)

The chorus of this is old; the two stanzas are mine. (See vol. ii. p. 9).

The Tears of Scotland.—(*Museum No.* 141.)

Dr. Blacklock told me that Smollet, who was at bottom a great Jacobite, composed these beautiful and pathetic verses on the infamous depredations of the Duke of Cumberland after the battle of Culloden.

I Dream'd I lay where Flowers were Springing.—(*Museum No.* 146.)

These two stanzas I composed when I was seventeen; they are among the oldest of my printed pieces. (See vol. i. p. 4).

The Banks of the Devon.—(*Museum No.* 157.)

These verses were composed on a charming girl, a Miss Charlotte Hamilton, who is now married to James M'Kitrick Adair, Esq., physician. She is sister to my worthy friend Gavin Hamilton, of Mauchline, and was born on the banks of Ayr, but was, at the time I wrote these lines, residing at Harvieston, in Clackmannanshire, on the romantic banks of the little river Devon. I first heard the air from a lady in Inverness, and got the notes taken down for the work. (See vol. i. p. 132).

Waly, Waly, up yon bank.—(*Museum No.* 158.)

In the west country I have heard a different edition of the second stanza. Instead of the four lines beginning with "When cockle shells," &c., the other way ran thus:—

"O wherefore need I busk my head?
Or wherefore need I kame my hair?
Sin' my fause Luve has me forsook,
And says he 'll never loe me mair."

Duncan Gray.—(*Museum No.* 160.)

Dr. Blacklock informed me that he had often heard the tradition that this air was composed by a carman in Glasgow.

Dumbarton Drums.—(*Museum No.* 161.)

This is the last of the West Highland Airs; and from it, over the whole tract of country to the confines of Tweedside, there is hardly a tune or song that one can say has taken its origin from any place or transaction in that part of Scotland. The oldest Ayrshire reel is "Stewarton Lasses," which was made by the father of the present Sir Walter Montgomery Cunningham, *alias* Lord Lysle, since which period there has indeed been local music in that country in great plenty. "Johnnie Faa" is the only old song which I could ever trace as belonging to the extensive district of Ayrshire.

Cauld Kail in Aberdeen.—(*Museum No.* 162.)

This song is by the Duke of Gordon. The old verses are:—

"There 's cauld kail in Aberdeen,
And castocks in Strathbogie;
When ilka lad maun hae his lass,
Then fye, gie me my coggie.
My coggie, sirs, my coggie, sirs,
I canna want my coggie;
I wadna gie my three-girr'd caup
For e'er a quean in Bogie.

There 's Johnnie Smith has got a wife
That scrimps him o' his coggie;
If she were mine, upon my life,
I 'd douk her in a bogie.
My coggie, sirs," &c.

For lack of Gold.—(*Museum No.* 163.)

The country girls in Ayrshire, instead of the line "She me forsook for a great Duke," say, "For Athole's Duke she me forsook," which I take to be the original reading.

These words were composed by the late Dr. Austin, physician in Edinburgh. He had courted a lady, to whom he was shortly to be married; but the Duke of Athole having seen her, became so much in love with her, that he made proposals of marriage, which were accepted of, and she "jilted the Doctor."

Here 's a Health to my true love.—(*Museum No.* 166.)

This song is Dr. Blacklock's. He told me that tradition gives the air to our James IV. of Scotland.

Hey tutti taitie.—(*Museum No.* 170.)

I have met the tradition universally over Scotland, and particularly about Stirling, in the neighbourhood of the scene, that this air was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn.

Raving winds around her blowing.—(*Museum No.* 173.)

I composed these verses on Miss Isabella Macleod of Rasa, alluding to her feelings on the death of her sister, and the still more melancholy death of her sister's husband, the late Earl of Loudoun, who shot himself out of sheer heart-break at some mortifications he suffered owing to the deranged state of his finances. (See vol. i. p. 137).

Since robbed of all that charmed my view.—(*Museum No.* 176.)

Tune—"Miss Hamilton's Delight."

The old name of this air is "The blossom o' the Raspberry." The song is Dr. Blacklock's.

Musing on the Roaring Ocean.—(*Museum No.* 179.)

I composed these verses out of compliment to a Mrs. M'Lachlan, whose husband is an Officer in the East Indies. (See vol. i. p. 139).

Blythe was she.—(*Museum No.* 180.)

I composed these verses while I stayed at Ochtertyre with Sir William Murray. The lady, who was also at Ochtertyre at the same time, was a well-known toast, Miss Euphemia Murray of Lintrose, who was called, and very justly, "The Flower of Strathmore." (See vol. i. p. 129).

Johnnie Faa, the Gipsey Laddie.—(*Museum No.* 181.)

The people in Ayrshire begin this song—"The Gypsies cam to Lord Cassilis' yett." They have a great many more stanzas in this song than I ever saw in any printed copy. The castle is still remaining at Maybole, where his Lordship shut up his wayward spouse, and kept her for life in confinement.

To Daunton me.—(*Museum No.* 182.)

The two following old stanzas to this tune have some merit:

"To daunton me, to daunton me,
O ken ye what it is that 'll daunton me?
There 's eighty-eight and eighty-nine,
And a' that I hae born sinsyne;
There 's cess and press and Presbytrie,
I think it will do meikle for to daunton me.

But to wanton me, to wanton me,
O ken ye what it is that wad wanton me?
To see gude corn upon the rigs,
And banishment among the Whigs,
And right restored where right sud be,
I think it wad do meikle for to wanton me."

Polwarth on the Green.—(*Museum No.* 183.)

The author is Captain John Drummond M'Grigor, of the family of Bochaldie.

I had a horse and I had nae mair.—(*Museum No.* 185.)

This story is founded on fact. A John Hunter, ancestor to a very respectable farming family, who live in a place in the parish (I think) of Galston, called Barr-mill, was the luckless hero that "had a horse and had nae mair." For some little youthful follies he found it necessary to make a retreat to the West Highlands, where he "feed himself to a Highland laird," for that is the expression of all the oral editions of the song I ever heard. The present Mr. Hunter, who told me the anecdote, is the great grandchild to our hero.

Up and waur them a', Willie.—(*Museum No.* 188.)

This edition of the song I got from *Tam Neil*, of facetious fame in Edinburgh. The proper expression is "Up and warn a', Willie," alluding to the Crantara, or warning of a Highland Clan to arms. Not understanding this, the Lowlanders in the west and south say, "Up and *waur* them a', Willie."

Hooly and Fairly.—(*Museum No.* 191.)

It is remark-worthy that the song of "Hooly and Fairly," in all the old editions of it, is called "The Drucken Wife o' Galloway," which localizes it to that country-side.

Rattlin', roarin' Willie.—(*Museum No.* 194.)

The last stanza of this song is mine; it was composed out of compliment to one of the worthiest fellows in the world, William Dunbar, Esq., Writer to the Signet, Edinburgh, and Colonel of the Chrochallan corps, a club of wits who took that title at the time of raising the fencible regiments. (See vol. i. p. 115).

Cromlet's Lilt.—(*Museum No.* 199.)

The following interesting account of this plaintive dirge was communicated to Mr. Riddel by Alexander Fraser Tytler, Esq., of Woodhouselee:—"In the latter end of the 16th century, the eldest son of Chisholm of Cromleck (an estate now possessed by the Drummonds) was much attached to a daughter of Stirling of Ardoch, commonly called Fair Helen of Ardoch. At that period most of our young men of family sought a fortune, or a grave, in France. Cromlus, when he went abroad was induced to leave the management of his correspondence with his mistress to a lay brother of the monastery of Dunblane, in that neighbourhood. This man, unfortunately, became himself deeply attached to Helen, and by keeping up letters and messages entrusted to him, and by telling her stories to the disadvantage of Cromlus, he managed to irritate both of the lovers, and all connection was broken off betwixt them.

"Helen was inconsolable, and Cromlus retired to a hermitage where he composed the "Lilt" which is identified with his name; and when the artful monk thought time had sufficiently softened Helen's sorrow, he proposed himself as a lover. Helen was obdurate; but at length, overcome by her brother's persuasions, she submitted, rather than consented to the marriage, but there her compliance ended. When forcibly put to bed, she started from it quite frantic, and screaming out that she heard three taps on the wainscot at the bed-head, with these words in the voice of Cromlus—'Helen, Helen, mind me!' Soon thereafter Cromlus arrived at home, and discovered the treachery of the confident—the fraudulent marriage was disannulled, and Helen became Lady Cromleck.

"N.B.—Helen's brother, above referred to, was the father of thirty-one children, his wife Margaret Murray, being a daughter of Murray of Struan, one of the seventeen sons of Tullybardine, and whose youngest son, commonly called the 'Tutor of Ardoch,' died in 1715, aged 111 years."

The Marquis of Huntly's Reel.—(*Museum No.* 201.)

The song was composed by the Rev. John Skinner, nonjuror clergyman at Linshart, near Peterhead.—He is likewise the author of "Tullochgorum," "Ewie wi' the crooked horn," "John o' Badenyond," &c., and what is of still more consequence, he is one of the worthiest of mankind. He is also the author of an ecclesiastical history of Scotland. The air is by Mr. Marshall, butler to the Duke of Gordon, the first composer of Strathspeys in the age. I have been told by somebody who had it of Marshall himself, that he took the idea of his three most celebrated pieces—"Marquis of Huntly's Reel," his "Farewell," and "Miss Admiral Gordon's Reel"—from the old air, "The German Lairdie."

Gil Morrice.—(*Museum No.* 203.)

This plaintive ballad ought to have been called "Child Maurice," and not "Gil Morrice." In its present dress it has gained immortal honour from Mr. Home's taking from it the ground-work of his fine tragedy of "Douglas." But I am of opinion that the present ballad is a modern composition; perhaps not much above the age of the middle of last century; at least I should be glad to see or hear of a copy of the present words prior to 1650. That it was taken from an old ballad, called "Child Maurice," now lost, I am inclined to believe; but the present one may be classed with "Hardyeanute" (first printed in 1719), "Kenneth," "Duncan," the "Laird of Woodhouselee," "Lord Livingston," "Binnorie," "The Death of Monteith," and several other modern productions, which have been swallowed by many readers, as ancient fragments of old poems.

"This beautiful, plaintive tune was composed by Mr. M'Gibbon, the selector of a collection of Scots tunes."—Robt. Riddell.

In addition to the observations on "Gil Morrice," I add, that of the ballads which Captain Riddell mentions, "Kenneth" and "Duncan" are juvenile compositions of Mr. M'Kenzie, the "Man of Feeling." Mr. M'Kenzie's father shewed them in MSS. to Dr. Blacklock, as the productions of his son, from which the Doctor rightly prognosticated that the young poet would make, in his more advanced years, a respectable figure in the world of letters. This I had from Blacklock.

When I upon thy Bosom lean.—(*Museum No.* 205.)

This song was the work of a very worthy, facetious old fellow, John Lapraik, of Dalfram, near Muirkirk; which little property he was obliged to sell in consequence of some connection as security for some persons concerned in that villanous bubble, *The Ayr Bank*. He has often told me that he composed this song one day when his wife had been fretting over their misfortunes.

Tibbie Dunbar.—(*Museum No.* 207.)

This tune is said to be the composition of John M'Gill, fiddler in Girvan. He called it after his own name.

My Harry was a Gallant gay.—(*Museum No.* 209.)

The oldest title I ever heard to this air was "The Highland Watch's Farewell to Ireland." The chorus I picked up from an old woman in Dunblane; the rest of the song is mine. (See vol. i. p. 167).

The Highland Character.—(*Museum No.* 210.)

This tune was the composition of General Reid, and called by him "The Highland, or 42nd Regiment's March." The words ("In the garb of old Gaul") are by Sir Harry Erskine.

Leaderhaughs and Yarrow.—(*Museum No.* 211.)

There is, in several collections, the old song of this name. It seems to have been the work of one of our itinerant minstrels, as he calls himself, at the conclusion of his song "Minstrel Burn."

The Tailor fell through the bed, thimbles an' a'.—(*Museum No.* 212.)

This air is the march of the Corporation of Tailors. The second and fourth stanzas are mine. (See vol. i. p. 137).

Beware o' Bonnie Anne.—(*Museum No.* 215.)

I composed this song out of compliment to Miss Ann Masterton, the daughter of my friend, Allan Masterton, the author of the air "Strathallan's Lament," and two or three others in this work. (See vol. i. p. 169).

This is no my ain House.—(*Museum No.* 216.)

The first half-stanza is old, the rest is Ramsay's. The tune is an old Highland air, called "Shuan truish willighan." The old words are:—

"O this is no my ain house, my ain house, my ain house,
This is no my ain house, I ken by the biggin' o't.
There 's bread and cheese are my door-cheeks, my door-cheeks, &c.,
There 's bread and cheese are my door-cheeks, an' pancakes the riggin' o't.

This is no my ain wean, my ain wean, my ain wean,
This is no my ain wean, I ken by the greetie o't,
I 'll tak' my curchie aff my head, aff my head, aff my head,
I 'll tak' my curchie aff my head, an' row't about the feetie o't."

Laddie, lie near me.—(*Museum No.* 218.)

This song ("Hark the loud tempest shakes") is by Blacklock.

The Gardener wi' his paidle.—(*Museum No.* 220.)

The air is the "Gardener's March." The title of the song only is old; the rest is mine. (See vol. i. p. 167).

The Day returns, my Bosom burns.—(*Museum No.* 224.)

I composed this song out of compliment to one of the happiest and worthiest married couples in the world—Robert Riddel, Esq., of Glenriddel, and his lady. At their fireside I have enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in this country put together; and to their kindness and hospitality I am indebted for many of the happiest hours of my life. (See vol. i. p. 143).

The Gaberlunzie Man.—(*Museum No.* 226.)

This song is supposed to commemorate an intrigue of James the V. Mr. Callander of Craigforth published, some years ago, an edition of "Christ's Kirk on the Green," and the "Gaberlunzie Man," with notes critical and historical. James the V. is said to have been fond of Gosford, in Aberlady Parish, and it was suspected by his contemporaries that in his frequent excursions to that part of the country he had other purposes in view besides golfing and archery.

Three favourite ladies, Sandilands, Weir, and Oliphant, (one of whom resided at Gosford, and the others in the neighbourhood), were occasionally visited by their royal and gallant admirer, which gave rise to the following satirical advice to his Majesty, from Sir David Lindsay, of the Mount; Lord Lyon:—

"Sow not your seed on Sandy lands,
Spend not your strength in Weir,
And ride not on an Elephant,
For spoiling o' your gear."

The Black Eagle.—(*Museum No.* 228.)

This song is by Dr. Fordyce, whose merits as a prose writer are well known.

Johnnie Cope.—(*Museum No.* 234.)

This satirical song was composed to commemorate General Cope's defeat at Prestonpans in 1745, when he marched against the Clans. The air was the tune of an old song, of which I have heard some verses, but now only remember the title, which was "Will ye go to the coals in the morning."

I love my Jean.—(*Museum No.* 235.)

This air is by Marshall, the song I composed out of compliment to Mrs. Burns. N.B.—It was during the honeymoon. (See vol. i. p. 141).

The Mill, Mill, O.—(*Museum No.* 242.)

The original, or at least a song evidently prior to Ramsay's, is still extant. It runs thus:—

"As I cam' down yon water side,
And by yon sheelin-hill, O,
There I spied a bonnie, bonnie lass,
And a lass that I loed right weel, O.
The mill, mill, O, and the kill, kill, O,
And the coggin o' Peggy's wheel, O,
The sack and the sieve, an' a' she did leave,
For dancin' the miller's reel, O."

Auld Robin Gray.—(*Museum No.* 247.)

This air was formerly called "The Bridegroom greets when the sun gangs down."

Tak' your auld cloak about you.—(*Museum No.* 250.)

A part of this old song, according to the English set of it, is quoted in Shakspeare. (*In the Drinking scene in Othello*).

Donald and Flora.—(*Museum No.* 252.)

This is one of those few Gaelic tunes, preserved from time immemorial in the Hebrides; they seem to be the ground-work of many of our finest Scots pastoral tunes. The words of this song were written to commemorate the unfortunate expedition of General Burgoyne in America, in 1777.

O were I on Parnassus Hill.—(*Museum No.* 255.)

This air is Oswald's: the song I made out of compliment to Mrs. Burns. (See vol. i. p. 142).

There 's a Youth in this city.—(*Museum No.* 258.)

This air is claimed by Neil Gow, who calls it his "Lament for his Brother." The first half-stanza of the song is old; the rest is mine. (See vol. i. p. 128).

Ca' the Ewes to the Knowes.—(*Museum No.* 264.)

This beautiful song is in the true old Scotch taste, yet I do not know that either air or words were in print before. (See vol. ii. p. 11).

The Bridal o't.—(*Museum No.* 269.)

This song is the work of Mr. Alexander Ross, late Schoolmaster at Lochee; and author of a beautiful Scots poem, called "The Fortunate Shepherdess."

The Bob o' Dumblane.—(*Museum No.* 270.)

Ramsay, as usual, has modernized this song. The original, which I learned on the spot, from my old hostess in the principal Inn there, is:—

"Lassie, lend me your braw hemp heckle,
And I 'll lend you my thrippin-kame;
My heckle is broken, it canna be gotten,
And we 'll gae dance the bob o' Dumblane.

Twa gaed to the wood, to the wood, to the wood,
Twa gaed to the wood—three came hame;
An it be na weel bobbit, weel bobbit, weel bobbit,
An it be na weel bobbit, we 'll bob it again."

I insert this song to introduce the following anecdote, which I have heard well authenticated. In the evening of the day of the battle of Dunblane (Sheriff-muir) when the action was over, a Scots officer in Argyle's army, observed to his Grace, that he was afraid the rebels would give out to the world that *they* had gotten the victory. "Weel, weel," answered his Grace, alluding to the foregoing ballad, "if they think it be nae well bobbit, we 'll bob it again."

A Mother's Lament for the Death of her Son.—(*Museum No.* 271.)

This most beautiful tune is, I think, the happiest composition of that bard-born genius, John Riddell, of the family of Glengarnock at Ayr. The words were composed to commemorate the much lamented and premature death of James Ferguson, Esq., junior, of Craigdarroch. (See vol. i. p. 146).

The Braes o' Ballochmyle.—(*Museum No.* 276.)

This air is the composition of my friend Allan Masterton, in Edinburgh. I composed the verses on the amiable and excellent family of Whitefoord's leaving Ballochmyle, when Sir John's misfortunes had obliged him to sell the estate. (See vol. i. p. 42).

The Shepherd's Preference.—(*Museum No.* 278.)

This song is Blacklock's. I don't know how it came by the name, but the oldest appellation of the air was "Whistle and I 'll come to you, my lad." It has little affinity to the tune commonly known by that name.

We ran, and they ran.—(*Museum No.* 282.)

The author was a Rev. Mr. Murdoch M'Lennan, minister at Crathie, Deeside.

The Bonnie Banks of Ayr.—(*Museum No.* 284.)

I composed this song as I conveyed my chest so far on the road to Greenock, where I was to embark in a few days for Jamaica. I meant it as my farewell Dirge to my native land. (See vol. i. p. 105).

A Waukrife Minnie.—(*Museum No.* 288).

I picked up this old song and tune from a country girl at Nithsdale. I never met with it elsewhere in Scotland.

The Braes o' Killiecrankie.—(*Museum No.* 292.)

The battle of Killiecrankie was the last stand made by the Clans for James, after his abdication. Here the gallant Lord Dundee fell in the moment of victory, and with him fell the hopes of the party. General M'Kay, when he found the Highlanders did not pursue his flying army, said, "Dundee must be killed, or he never would have overlooked this advantage." A great stone marks the spot where Dundee fell. (See vol. ii. p. 11).

Craigieburn Wood.—(*Museum No.* 301.)

It is remarkable of this air, that it is the confine of that country where the greatest part of our Lowland music (so far as from the title, words, &c., we can localize it) has been composed. From Craigieburn, near Moffat, until one reaches the West Highlands, we have scarcely one slow air of antiquity.

The song was composed on a passion which a Mr. Gillespie, a particular friend of mine, had for a Miss Lorimer, afterwards a Mrs. Whelpdale. The young lady was born in Craigieburn Wood. The chorus is part of an old foolish ballad. (See vol. i. p. 195).

Frae the Friends and Land I love.—(*Museum No.* 302.)

I added the four last lines by way of giving a turn to the theme of the poem, such as it is. (See vol. i. p. 194).

Hughie Graham.—(*Museum No.* 303.)

There are several editions of this ballad. This, here inserted, is from an oral tradition in Ayrshire, where, when I was a boy, it was a popular song. It originally had a simple old tune, which I have forgotten.

A Southland Jenny.—(*Museum No.* 308.)

This is a popular Ayrshire song, though the notes were never taken down before. It, as well as many of the ballad tunes in this collection, was written down from Mrs. Burns' voice.

My Tocher 's the Jewel.—(*Museum No.* 312.)

This tune is claimed by Nathaniel Gow. It is notoriously taken from "The Muckin o' Geordie's Byre." It is also to be found, long prior to Nathaniel Gow's era, in Aird's selection of Airs and Marches, the first edition, under the name of "The Highway to Edinburgh." (See vol. i. p. 194).

Then Gudewife count the lawin.—(*Museum No.* 313.)

The chorus of this is part of an old song, one stanza of which I recollect:—

"Every day my wife tells me
That ale and brandy will ruin me;
But if gude liquor be my dead,
This shall be written on my head—
Landlady, count the lawin," &c.

(See vol. ii. p. 13).

There 'll never be Peace till Jamie comes hame.—(*Museum No.* 315.)

This tune is sometimes called "There are few gude fellows when Willie 's awa." But I never have been able to meet in with anything else of the song than the title. (See vol. i. p. 186).

I do confess thou art so fair.—(*Museum No.* 321.)

This song is altered from a poem by Sir Robert Ayton, private secretary to Mary and Anne, Queens of Scotland. The poem is to be found in "Watson's collection of Scots Poems," the earliest collection printed in Scotland. I think that I have improved the simplicity of the sentiments by giving them a Scots dress. (See vol. i. p. 198).

The Sodger Laddie.—(*Museum No.* 323.)

The first verse of this is old; the rest is by Ramsay. The tune seems to be the same with a slow air, called "Jackey Hume's Lament," or "The Hollin Buss," or "Ken ye what Meg o' the Mill has gotten?"

Galloway Tam.—(*Museum No.* 325.)

I have seen an interlude acted at a wedding, to this tune, called "The Wooing of the Maiden." These entertainments are now much worn out in this part of Scotland. Two are still retained in Nithsdale, viz., "Sully puir Auld Glenae," and this one, "The Wooing of the Maiden."

As I cam' down by yon castle wa'.—(*Museum No.* 326.)

This is a very popular Ayrshire song.

Lord Ronald, my Son.—(*Museum No.* 327.)

This air, a very favourite one in Ayrshire, is evidently the original of "Lochaber." In this manner most of our finest more modern airs have had their origin. Some early minstrel composed the simple, artless, original air; which being picked up by the more learned musician, took the improved form it bears.

O'er the moor amang the heather.—(*Museum No.* 328.)

This song is the composition of a Jean Glover, a girl who was not only a wh—, but also a thief; and in one or other character has visited most of the Correction Houses in the west. She was born, I believe, in Kilmarnock. I took the song down from her singing as she was strolling through the country with a slight-of-hand blackguard.

To the Rosebud.—(*Museum No.* 330.)

"All hail to thee, thou balmy bud."

This song is the composition of a Mr. Johnson, a joiner in the neighbourhood of Belfast. The tune is by Oswald, altered evidently from "Johnnie's Grey Breeks."

Yon wild mossy mountains.—(*Museum No.* 331.)

This tune is by Oswald. The song alludes to a part of my private history, which it is of no consequence to the world to know. (See vol. i. p. 197).

It is na, Jean, thy bonnie face.—(*Museum No.* 333.)

These words were originally English verses; I gave them their Scots dress. (See vol. ii. p. 13).

Thou art gane away frae me, Mary.—(*Museum No.* 338.)

This tune is the same with "Hand awa frae me, Donald."

The tears I shed must ever fall.—(*Museum No.* 340.)

This song of genius was composed by a Miss Cranstoun. It wanted four lines to make all the stanzas suit the music, which I added, and are the first four of the last stanza.

The tither morn.—(*Museum No.* 345.)

This tune is originally from the Highlands. I have heard a Gaelic song to it, which I was told was very clever, but not by any means a lady's song. (See vol. ii. p. 12).

A Posie to my ain dear May.—(*Museum No.* 373.)

It appears evident to me that Oswald composed his "Roslin Castle" on the modulation of this air. In the second part of Oswald's, in the first three bars, he has either hit on a wonderful similarity to, or else he has entirely borrowed the first three bars of the old air; and the close of both tunes is almost exactly the same. The old verses to which it was sung, when I took down the notes from a country girl's voice, had no great merit.

The bonnie lass made the bed to me.—(*Museum No.* 448.)

This was composed on an amour of Charles II. when sculking in the North, about Aberdeen, in the time of the Usurpation. He formed *une petite affaire* with a daughter of the House of Portletham, who was "the lass that made the bed" to him. (See vol. i. p. 142).

GLOSSARY.

THE *ch* and *gh* have always the guttural sound. The sound of the English diphthong *oo*, is commonly spelled *ou*. The French *u*, a sound which often occurs in the Scottish language, is marked *oo*, or *ui*. The *a*, in genuine Scottish words, except when forming a diphthong, or followed by an *e* mute after a single consonant, sounds generally like the broad English *a* in *wall*. The Scottish diphthong *aw*, always, and *ea*, very often, sound like the French *e* masculine. The Scottish diphthong *ey*, sounds like the Latin *ei*.

A

A', All.
Aback, away, aloof, backwards.
Abeet, *albeit*, although.
Abeigh, at a shy distance.
Aboon, above, up.
Abread, abroad, in sight, to publish.
Abreed, in breadth.
Addle, putrid water, &c.
Ae, one.
Aff, off.
Aff-loof, off hand, extempore, without premeditation.
Afore, before.
Aft, oft.
Aften, often.
Agee, on one side.
Agley, off the right line; wrong, awry.
Aiblins, perhaps.
Aik, oak.
Aikerbread, the breadth of an acre.
Ain, own.
Air, long since. *Air up;* soon up in the morning.
Airle-penny, a silver penny given as airles or hiring-money.
Airles, earnest-money.
Airn, iron, a tool of that metal, a mason's chisel.
Airt, quarter of the heavens; point of the compass.
Aith, an oath.
Aits, oats.
Aiver, an old horse.
Aiz'e, a hot cinder.
Akwart, awkward, athwart.
Alake, alas.
Alane, alone.
Amaist, almost.
Amang, among.
Ambrie, *aumrie*, cupboard.
An', and.
An, if.
Ance, once.
Ane, one.
Anent, over against, concerning, about.
Anew, enough.
Anither, another.
Aqueesh, between.
Ase, ashes of wood, remains of a hearth fire.
Ask'ent, asquint; aslant.
Asteer, abroad; stirring in a lively manner.
Atains, or *atanes*, at once; at the same time.
Attour, moreover, beyond; besides; out over.
Athart, athwart.
Atween, between.
Atweel no, by no means.
Aught, possession; as, *in a' my aught*, in all my possession.
Auld, old.
Auld-farran, or *auld farrant*, sagacious, prudent, cunning.
Auld lang syne, olden time, days of other years.
Auld Reeky, a cant name for Edinburgh; old and smoky.
Auld shoom, old shoes literally, a discarded lover metaphorically.
Aumos, gift to a beggar.
Aumos-dish, a beggar's dish in which the aumos is received.
Auntie, aunt.
Aurglebargin, or *caglebargin*, to contend and wrangle.
Ava, at all.
Awa, away, begone.
Awfu', awful.
Awnie, bearded.
Awsome, frightful; terrible.
Ayont, beyond.

B

BA', ball.
Babie-clouts, child's first clothes.
Backets, ash-boards, as pieces of backet for removing the ashes.
Back, returning.
Backlins, coming, coming back.
Back-yett, private gate.
Bad, did bid.
Baggie, the belly.
Baide, endured, did stay.
Baig'nets, bayonets.
Bailie, a magistrate in Scotland.
Baimie, having large bones; stout.
Bairn, a child.
Bairntime, a family of children, a brood.
Baith, both.
Bake, a small cake or biscuit.
Ballets, *ballants*, ballads.
Bane, bone.
Bang, is sometimes an action of haste; to beat. We say, "he or it came with a bang." A *bang* also means a great number—"Of customers she had a bang."
Bannock, or *bonnock*, bread made of oaten-meal, thicker than cakes.
Bardie, diminutive of bard.
Barefit, barefoot.
Barken'd, when mire, blood, &c., hardens upon a thing, like bark.
Barket, barked.
Barkin, barking.
Barley-bree, malt liquor.
Barlikhood, a fit of drunken angry passion.
Barmie, of, or like barm, yeasty.
Batch, a crew, a gang.
Batts, bots, colic.
Bauchles, old shoes worn as slippers.
Bauckie-bird, the bat.
Baudrons, *badrans*, a cat.
Bauk, a joist or rafter; the beam of weighing scales.
Bauld, bold.
Bawbee, halfpenny.
Bawk, a narrow ridge left untilled in a cornfield.
Bawsn't, having a white stripe down the face.
Be, to let be; to give over, to cease.
Bear, see Bere.

Bearded-bere, barley with its bristly head.
Beas, vermin.
Beastie, diminutive of beast.
Bedeen, immediately, in haste.
Beet, beek, to add fuel to a fire, to bask.
Beets, boots, sustains.
Befa', to befall, or happen.
Beft, beaten.
Begrutten, all in tears.
Beik, to bask.
Beld, bald.
Belyve, by and by, presently, quickly.
Ben, into the spence or parlour; a spence.
Benmost-bore, the remotest hole, the innermost recess.
Benison, blessing.
Bent, the open field.
Benty, overgrown with coarse grass.
Bere, barley.
Bethankit, grace after meat.
Beuk, a book.
Bicker, a kind of wooden dish; a short rapid race.
Bickering, careering; school-boys battling with stones.
Biel, or *bield*, shelter, a sheltered place, the sunny nook of a wood.
Bien, wealthy, plentiful.
Big, to build.
Biggin, building a house.
Biggit, built.
Bill, a bull.
Billie, a brother, a young fellow.
Bing, a heap of potatoes, &c.
Birdie-cocks, young cocks still belonging to the brood.
Birk, birch.
Birken-shaw, birchen-wood-shaw, a small wood,
Birkie, a clever fellow.
Birl, to carouse; when common people join their halfpennies for purchasing liquor, they call it, "birling a bawbee."
Birnie, birnie ground is where thick heath has been burnt, leaving the birns, or unconsumed stalks, standing up sharp and stubbly.
Birr, energy.
Birring, a noise of partridges, &c., when they rise.
Birses, bristles.
Bit, crisis, nick of time, place.
Bizz, a bustle; to buzz.
Black-bonnet, byname for an elder.
Black's the grun', as black as the ground.
Black-a-vic'd, of a black complexion.
Blae, black and blue, the colour of the skin when bruised.
Blastie, a shrivelled dwarf, a term of contempt; full of mischief.
Blastit, blasted.
Blate, bashful, sheepish.
Blather, bladder.
Blathrie, idle talk.
Blatter, a rattling noise.
Blaud, a flat piece of anything, to slap; heavy rain.
Blaudin-shower, a heavy driving rain; a *blauding*, signifies a beating.
Blaw, to blow, to boast; "blaw i' my lug," to flatter.
Blawart, a blue flower that grows among corn.
Bleer my een, dim my eyes.
Bleerit, bedimmed, eyes hurt with weeping.
Bleeze, bleezing, flame, blazing.
Blellum, an idle talking fellow.
Blether, to talk idly; nonsense.
Bleth'rin, talking idly.
Blink, a little while; a smiling look; to look kindly; to shine by fits.
Blinkan, the flame rising and falling, as of a lamp when the oil is exhausted.
Blinker, a term of contempt; a lively engaging girl.
Blinkin', smirking; smiling with the eyes; looking lovely.
Blirt and blearie, out-burst of grief, with wet eyes.
Blitter, a snipe.
Blue-gown, one of those beggars who formerly got annually, on the king's birth-day, a blue cloak or gown, with a badge.
Bluid, blood.
Bluntie, a sniveller; a stupid person.
Blype, a shred, a large piece.
Blythe, cheerful.
Boal, a little press or cupboard in the wall.
Bobbit, obeisance made by a lady.
Bock, to vomit, to gush intermittently.
Bocked, gushed, vomited.
Bodin, or *bodden*, provided or furnished.
Bodle, a copper coin, of the value of two pennies Scots.
Bodword, an ominous message.
Bogie, a small morass.
Bogles, spirits, hobgoblins.
Boglebo, hobgoblin or spectre.
Bonnie, bonie, or *bonny*, handsome, beautiful.
Bonnock, see *bannock*.
Boord, a board.
Boortree, the shrub elder, planted much of old in hedges of barnyards and gardens.
Boost, behoved, must needs.
Bore, a hole in a wall, a cranny.
Boss, empty.
Bother, to bather, to make a fuss.
Bourd, jest or dally.
Bousing, drinking.
Bow-hought, out-kneed, crooked at the knee joint.
Bowk, bouk, body.
Bow-kail, cabbage.
Bowt, bowlt, bended, crooked.
Brachens, ferns.
Brae, a declivity, a precipice; the slope of a hill.
Braid, broad.
Braird, the first sprouting of corns.
Braik, a kind of harrow.
Braindg't, reeled forward.
Brainge, to run rashly forward, to churn violently.
Braing't, "the horse brainget," plunged and fretted in the harness.
Brak, broke, became insolvent.
Brander, a gridiron.
Brands, calves of the legs.
Brang, bought.
Brankan, prancing, a capering.
Branks, a kind of wooden curb for horses.
Brankie, gaudy.
Brash, a sudden illness.
Brats, coarse clothes, rags, &c.
Brattle, a short race, hurry, fury; noise as of horse feet.
Braw, fine, handsome.
Brawlys, or *brawlie*, very well, finely, heartily, bravely.
Braxie, a morbid sheep.
Breastie, diminutive of breast.
Breastit, did spring up or forward; the act of mounting a horse.
Brechame, a horse-collar.
Breckan, fern.
Bree, juice, liquid.
Breef, an invulnerable or irresistible spell.
Breeks, breeches.
Brent, bright, clear; "a brent brow," a brow high and smooth.
Brent-new, brand new; in fashion.
Brewin', brewing, gathering.
Brig, a bridge.
Briss, to press.
Brither, a brother.
Brochen, water-gruel of oatmeal.
Brock, a badger.
Brogue, a hum, a trick.
Broo, broth, liquid, water.
Broose, a race at country weddings; he who first reaches the bridegroom's house, on returning from church, wins the broose.
Brose, a dish made of oatmeal, sometimes seasoned with butter.
Browden, fond.
Brownie, a spirit supposed to haunt old houses.
Browst, ale, as much malt liquor as is brewed at a time.
Browster-wives, ale-house wives.
Brugh, a burgh.
Bruilzie, brulzie, a broil, a combustion.
Brunstane, brimstone.
Brunt, did burn, burnt.
Brust, to burst; burst.
Buchan-bullers, the boiling of the sea among the rocks on the coast of Buchan.
Buckskin, an inhabitant of Virginia.
Bucky, a sea-snail; a term of reproach, when we express a cross-natured fellow by "a thrawn fellow."
Buff, nonsense.
Buff our beef, thrash us soundly, give us a beating behind and before.
Buff and blue, the colours of the Whigs.
Bught, a pen.
Bughtin-time, the time of collecting the sheep in the pens to be milked.
Buirdly, stout made, broad built.
Buller, to bubble; the motion of water at the fountain-head, or noise of a rising tide.
Bumbazed, confused; made to stare and look like an idiot.
Bum-clock, the humming beetle that flies in the summer evenings.
Bummin, humming as bees, buzzing.
Bummle, to blunder, a drone, an idle fellow.
Bummler, a blunderer, one whose noise is greater than his work.
Bung, completely fuddled, as it were to the bung,
Bunker, a window-seat.
Burd-alane, a solitary bird.
Burdies, diminutive of birds.
Bure, did bear.
Burn, burnie, water, a rivulet, a small stream which is heard as it runs.
Burnewin', i.e., burn the wind, the blacksmith.
Burr-thrissle, the Scottish thistle.
Busk, to dress.
Buskie, bushy.
Buskit, dressed.
Buskit-nest, an ornamental residence.
Buss, bush, shelter.
Bussle, a bustle; to bustle.
But, bot, with, without.
But an' ben, the country kitchen and parlour.
Bygane, bypast.
By himsel', lunatic, distracted.

Eyke, a bee hive, a wild bee nest.
Byre, a cow-house, a sheep-pen.

C

CA', to call, to name, to drive.
Ca't, or *ca'd*, called, driven; calved.
Cadger, a carrier, hawker.
Cadie, or *caddie*, a person; a young fellow; a public messenger.
Caff, a calf; chaff.
Caird, a tinker.
Cairn, a loose heap of stones, a rustic monument.
Caition, security.
Calf-ward, a small inclosure for calves.
Calimanco, a certain kind of cotton cloth worn by ladies.
Callan, a boy.
Caller, fresh, sound, refreshing
Callet, a loose woman, a follower of a camp.
Cam', came,
Camshough, or *campsho*, stern, grim, of a distorted countenance.
Cangle, to wrangle.
Canna, cannot.
Cannie, gentle, mild, dexterous.
Cannilie, dexterously, gently.
Cant, to tell merry old tales.
Cantharidian, made of Cantharides or the Spanish fly.
Cantie, or *canty*, cheerful, merry.
Cantraip, a charm, a spell.
Capernoited, whimsical, ill-natured.
Caprin, capering, skipping merrily.
Cap-stane, cope-stone, topmost stone of the building.
Car, a rustic cart with or without wheels.
Careerin', moving cheerfully.
Carena, care not.
Cark, *carkling*, painful anxiety, anxious.
Carle, an old man.
Carlin, a stout old woman.
Carl-hemp, the male stalk of hemp, easily known by its superior strength and stature, and being without seed.
Cartes, cards.
Castock, the stalk of a cabbage.
Cathel, cawdle, a hot pot made of ale, sugar, and eggs.
Caudron, a cauldron.
Cauk and keel, chalk and red clay.
Cauld, cold.
Cauldrife, spiritless, wanting cheerfulness in address.
Caup, a wooden drinking vessel, a cup.
Cavie, a hen coop.
Cawsy, causeway, street.
Chafts, chops.
Chancy, fortunate.
Chantan, *chantin*, chanting.
Chanter, drone of a bagpipe.
Chap, a person, a fellow; a blow.
Chaup, a stroke, a blow.
Cheek for chow, close and united; brotherly, side by side.
Cheekit, checked.
Cheep, a chirp; to chirp.
Chiel, or *chield*, a young fellow.
Chimla, or *chimlie*, a fire-grate, a fireplace.
Chimla-lug, the fire-side,
Chirm, chirp and sing like a bird.
Chirps, cries of a young bird.
Chittering, shivering, trembling.
Chockin, choking.
Chow, to chew; a quid of tobacco.
Chuckie, a brood-hen, a chicken.
Chuffie, fat-faced.
Clachan, a small village about a church, a hamlet.
Claise, or *claes*, clothes.
Claith, cloth.
Claithing, clothing.
Claivers and havers, agreeable nonsense, to talk foolishly.
Clank, a sharp blow or stroke that makes a noise.
Clap-clack, clapper of a mill.
Clapper-claps, the clapper of a mill; it is now silenced.
Clarkit, wrote.
Clartie, dirty, filthy.
Clash, an idle tale, the story of the day.
Claught, snatched at, laid hold of.
Claut, to clean, to scrape, hoard.
Clauted, scraped.
Claver, clover.
Clavers, idle stories.
Claw, to scratch.
Claymore, broadsword.
Cleckin, a brood of chickens or ducks.
Cleed, to clothe.
Cleek, hook, snatch.
Cleekit, having caught.
Clegs, the gad flies.
Clengh, a den betwixt rocks.
Clink, coin, money; a female tale-bearer.
Clinkin, jerking; *clinking down*, sitting down hastily.
Clinkumbell, the church bell, he who rings it, a sort of beadle.
Clinty, hard, stony.
Clips, wool-shears.
Clishmaclaver, idle conversation.
Clock, to hatch; a beetle.
Clockin, hatching.
Cloited, the fall of any soft moist thing.
Cloot, or *clute*, the hoof of a cow, sheep, &c.
Clootie, a familiar name for the devil.
Closs, a lane or alley.
Clour, a bump, or swelling, after a blow.
Cloutin, repairing with cloth.
Cluds, clouds.
Clunk, the sound of drinking from a bottle.
Coaxing, wheedling.
Coble, a fishing-boat.
Cockernony, a lock of hair tied upon a girl's head; a cap.
Cockstool, a pillory.
Coft, bought.
Cog, a wooden dish.
Cogie, diminutive of cog.
Coila, from Kyle, a district in Ayrshire; so called, saith tradition, from Coil, or Coilus, a Pictish monarch.
Collie, a general, and sometimes a particular, name for country curs.
Collie-shangie, a quarrel among dogs; an Irish row.
Commaun, command.
Coman, *comin*, coming.
Convoyed, accompanied lovingly.
Cood, the cud.
Coof, or *cuif*, a blockhead; a ninny.
Cookit, appeared and disappeared by fits.
Cool'd in her linens, in her dead clothes.
Coor, to cover and recover.
Cooser, a stallion.
Coost, did cast.
Coot, the ancle; a species of water fowl.
Cootie, a wooden kitchen dish: also those fowls, whose legs are clad with feathers, are said to be *cootie*.
Corbies, carrion crows.
Core, corps; party; clan.
Corn't, fed with oats.
Cosie, warm and comfortable.
Cosily, snugly.
Cotter, the inhabitant of a cot-house, or cottage.
Couthie, kind, loving.
Cove, a cave.
Cowe, to terrify; to keep under, to lop; a fright; a branch of furze, broom, &c.
Cower, to crouch.
Cowp, to barter; to tumble over; a company of people.
Cowp the cran, to tumble a full bucket or basket.
Cowpet, *cowpit*, tumbled.
Cowran, *cowrin*, cowering.
Cowte, a colt.
Cozie, snug.
Crabbit, crabbed, fretful.
Crack, conversation; to converse.
Crackin', conversing.
Craft, or *croft*, a field near a house, in old husbandry.
Craig, *craigie*, neck, throat.
Craiks, cries or calls incessantly; a bird; the landrail.
Crail, a crooked dwarf.
Crambo-clink, or *crambo-jingle*, rhymes, doggerel verses.
Crank, the noise of an ungreased wheel —metaphorically, inharmonious verse.
Crankous, fretful, captious.
Cranreuch, the hoar frost, called in Nithsdale "frost rhyne."
Crap, a crop; to crop.
Craw, a crow of a cock; a rook.
Creel, a basket; *to have one's wit in a creel*, to be crazed; to be fascinated.
Creepie-stool, the same as cutty-stool.
Creeshie, greasy.
Creuks, a disease of horses.
Crocks, old ewes that have given over bearing.
Cronie, an intimate acquaintance.
Crood, or *croud*, to coo as a dove.
Crookieden, a cant name for hell.
Croon, a hollow and continued moan: to make a noise like the low roar of a bull; to hum a tune.
Crooning, humming.
Crouchie, crook-backed.
Crouse, cheerful; courageous.
Crousely, cheerfully; courageously.
Crowdie, a composition of oatmeal, boiled water, and butter; sometimes made from the broth of beef, mutton, &c.
Crowdie-time, breakfast time.
Crowlin, crawling, a deformed creeping thing.
Crummy, a cow.
Crummie's nicks, marks on the horns of a cow.
Crummock, *crummet*, *crummie*, *crombie*, a cow with crooked horns.
Crummock driddle, walk slowly, leaning on a staff with a crooked head.
Crump, *crumpin*, hard and brittle, spoken of bread; frozen snow yielding to the foot.
Crunt, a blow on the head with a cudgel.
Cryn, to shrink, or become less by drying.
Cuddle, to clasp and caress.
Cudeigh, a bribe; a present.
Cuif, see *coof*,
Culzie, to entice; to flatter.
Cummock, a short staff with a crooked head.
Cun, to taste; to learn; to know.
Cunzie, or *coonie*, coin.

Curch, a covering for the head; a kerchief.
Curchie, a courtesy, female obeisance.
Curler, a player at a game on the ice, practised in Scotland, called curling.
Curlie, curled, whose hair falls naturally in ringlets.
Curling, a well-known game on the ice.
Curmurring, murmuring; a slight rumbling noise.
Curn, a small parcel.
Curpin, curpan, the rump, the rear of a person or animal.
Curple, a crupper.
Curshe, a kerchief; a linen dress worn by our Highland women.
Cutled, used kind and gaining methods for obtaining love and friendship.
Cutty, short; a spoon broken in the middle.
Cutty-stool, or *creepie-chair*, the seat of shame, stool of repentance.

D

DAD, to beat one thing against another. "He fell with a *dad*." "He *dadded* his head against the wall."
Daddie, a father.
Daffin, merriment; foolishness.
Daft, merry; giddy; foolish.
Daft-buckie, mad fish.
Daez't, bewildered, stupefied.
Daimen-icker, an ear of corn occasionally.
Dainty, pleasant, good-humoured, agreeable, rare.
Daintiths, delicacies, dainties.
Daise, daez, to stupefy.
Dam, urine.
Dander, daunder, to wander to and fro; to saunter.
Dandered, wandered.
Dang, did ding; beat, thrust, drive.
Dappl't, dappled.
Darklins, darkling, without light.
Darn, to hide; to mend.
Dash, to put out of countenance.
Daud, to thrash, to abuse; a large piece of anything.
Daudin showers, rain urged by wind.
Daunton, intimidate.
Daur, to dare.
Daury, or *daurk*, a day's labour.
Daurt, dared.
Dant, dawt, fondle.
Davoc, diminutive of Davie, as Davie is of David.
Dawd, a large piece.
Dawin, dawning of the day.
Dawtit, or *dawtet*, fondled, caressed.
Dead-sweer, very loth, averse to, lazy.
Dearies, diminutive of dears; sweethearts.
Dearthfu', dear, expensive.
Deave, to deafen.
Deil, the devil.
Deil-ma-care, no matter for all that.
Delcerit, delirious.
Delvin', digging.
Deray, merriment, jollity; solemnity; tumult, disorder; noise.
Dern, secret, hidden, lonely.
Descrive, to describe, to perceive.
Deuks, ducks.
Deval, devle, to descend, fall, hurry.
Dewgs, rags or shapings of cloth.
Diddle, to shake, to jog.
Didle, to act, or move like a dwarf.
Dight, to wipe; to clean corn from chaff.
Dimpl't, dimpled.
Din, dun, sallow, noise.
Ding, to worst, to push; to surpass, to excel.
Ding dang, moving hastily on the back of another.
Dink, neat, tidy, trim.
Dinna, do not.
Dirl, a slight tremulous stroke or pain.
Disrespecket, disrespected.
Dit, to stop or close up a hole.
Divot, thin turf.
Dizzen, a dozen.
Dochter, daughter.
Dock, the backside.
Docken, a dock; the herb.
Doited, stupefied, silly from age.
Doll, a large piece; dole or share.
Donsie, unlucky; affectedly neat and trim; pettish.
Doo, dove, pigeon.
Doodle, to dandle.
Doofart, a dull heavy-headed fellow.
Dorts, a proud pet.
Dosend, cold; impotent.
Douce, or *douse*, sober, wise, prudent.
Doucer, douser, more prudent.
Doucely, soberly, prudently.
Dought, was or were able.
Douks, dives under water.
Doup, backside; the small remains of a candle.
Doup-skelper, one that strikes the tail.
Doure, stout, durable; sullen, stubborn.
Dow, am or are able; can.
Dow'd (liquor) that is dead, or has lost the spirits; or withered (plant).
Dowff, pithless, wanting force.
Dowie, worn with grief, fatigue, &c., half asleep.
Downa, am or are not able, cannot; *downa-do's*, incapacity.
Doylt, stupid; wearied, exhausted.
Doytin, walking stupidly, bewildered.
Dozen, stupefied, the effects of age; *to dozen*, to benumb.
Draigle, to soil by trailing; to draggle among wet, &c.
Drants, long prayers.
Drap, a drop; to drop.
Drapping, dropping.
Draunting, drawling; of a slow enunciation.
Dree, to suffer; to endure.
Dreep, to ooze; to drop.
Dreigh, tedious, long about it; lingering.
Dribs, drops.
Driddle, perform, to be insignificantly diligent.
Drift, a drove, a flight of fowls; snow moved by the wind.
Dring, the noise of a kettle before it boils.
Drizel, a little water in a rivulet, scarcely appearing to run.
Droddum, the breech.
Droop-rumpl't, that droops at the crupper.
Drouk, to drench.
Droukit, drenched, all wet.
Drounting, drawling.
Drouth, thirst, drought.
Drouthy, thirsty, dry; addicted to tippling.
Drucken, drunken.
Drum, a hill.
Drumly, muddy.
Drummock, or *drammock*, meal and water mixed in a raw state.
Drunt, pet, sour humour.
Dub, or *dyb*, a small pond; a hollow filled with rain water; mire, a puddle.
Duchless, weak, silly.
Duchty, powerful, assuming.
Duddie, ragged.
Duds, rags, clothes.
Dult, a dolt.
Dumfounder, to stun with a blow, to stupefy.
Dunder, to make a thundering noise.
Dung, or *dung-dang*, worsted, pushed, driven, stricken, overcome.
Dunsh, see *dush*.
Dunt, a large piece, a surprise; a blow; to palpitate.
Dunted, throbbed, beaten.
Dunty, a doxy.
Durk, a dirk, a poniard or dagger.
Dush, dunsh, to push or butt as a ram.
Dusht, pushed by a ram, ox, &c.; overcome with superstitious fear; to drop down suddenly.
Dust, a riot.
Dwaum, a sudden faintness; to faint suddenly.
Dwine, to pine away.
Dyke, a wall.
Dyn, noise.
Dynle, to tremble, to shake.
Dyvor, a bankrupt, or about to become one.

E

EAG, to egg, to incite, to stir up.
Eard, earth, the ground.
Earn, to coagulate milk; eagle.
Earning, rennet, the coagulating matter used for curdling milk.
E'e, the eye.
Eebree, the eye-brow.
Eek, to make an addition to.
Een, the eyes; the evening.
E'enin, the evening.
Eerie, frighted, haunted, dreading spirits.
Eerock, a chicken.
Eild, old age.
Eildeens, of the same age.
Eith, easy.
Ither, easier,
Elbuck, the elbow.
Eldin, fuel, as coal, peats, &c.
Eldritch, ghastly, frightful, elvish.
Elder, an elder, or church officer.
Elsin, or *elshin*, a shoemaker's awl.
En', end.
Enbrugh, Embrugh, Edinburgh.
Endland, along.
Eneugh, aneugh, enough.
Ergh, scrupulous, when one makes faint attempts to do a thing, without a steady resolution; half boiled.
Esthler, Ashler, hewn stone.
Ether, an adder.
Ether-stone, stone formed by adders, an adder bead.
Etter, the matter from a suppuration; to fester.
Ettercap, or *ethercap*, a spider; an ill-natured person.
Ettle, to try, to attempt.
Even'd, compared.
Evite, to shun.
Eydent, diligent, laborious.

F.

FA, to become, to suit.
Fa,' a trap, such as is used for catching rats or mice.

Fa', fall; lot; to fall.
Fa's, does fall; water-falls.
Fa' that, to enjoy, to try, to inherit.
Fab, a trick, a cheat; to trick, to cheat.
Face, set up a face, set up a pretence.
Facing-tools, drinking-pots.
Faddom, to fathom, to comprehend.
Faddom't, fathomed, measured with the extended arms.
Fadge, a spongy sort of bread in shape of a roll.
Fae, a foe.
Faem, foam.
Faik, to fold, to tuck; to abate any thing in price; a failure, a fold, a tuck.
Faik-dyke, a wall of turf.
Faiket, forgiven or excused, abated a demand.
Fail, thick turf, such as are used for building dykes for folds, inclosures, &c.
Faird, a bustle, a sudden displeasure.
Fainness, gladness, overcome with joy.
Fair-fa-ye, when we wish well to one, that a good or fair fate may befall him.
Fair-farrand, well-favoured.
Fairin,' fairing, a present brought from a fair.
Fairny-tickles, freckles.
Fait, neat, in good order.
Fallow, fellow.
Faud, did find.
Fang, the talons of a fowl.
Fang, to, to grip, to hold fast.
Fankle, an entanglement; to entangle, to disarrange.
Farden, a farthing.
Fareweel, farewell, adieu.
Farl, a cake of bread, &c.
Fash, trouble, care; to trouble, to care for.
Fasheous, troublesome.
Fasht, troubled.
Fasten-e'en, Fasten's even, night before Lent.
Fattrels, fathrals, ends of ribbons, folds or puckerings.
Faugh, a single furrow, out of lea, fallow; a colour between white and red.
Faught, a fight.
Fauld, a fold; to fold.
Faulding, folding.
Fause, false.
Fause-tail, a braid of hair.
Fausity, a falsity.
Faut, fault.
Faute, want, lack.
Fautor, defaulter.
Fawn, fallen.
Fawsont, decent, seemly.
Feal, a field; smooth; loyal; steadfast.
Fearfu', fearful, frightful.
Fear't, affrighted.
Fecht, a fight, a struggle; to fight; to toil; to struggle.
Fechtin', fighting.
Feck, many, plenty; as *maist feck*, the greatest number; *nae feck*, very few; *little feck*, little exertion.
Fecket, an under waistcoat with sleeves.
Feckfu', large, brawny, stout.
Feckly, mostly; weakly.
Feed, or *feud:* feud, hatred, quarrel.
Feedom, a fatality.
Feerie, nimble.
Feeze, to screw; to twist; to flatter.
Feg, a fig.
Fegs, faith, a petty oath.
Feide, feud, enmity.
Feigh, an interjection of disgust.
Feil, many.
Feirrie, stout, vigorous, healthy.
Felly, relentless.
Fen, successful struggle; fight; to ward off.
Fend, fen', a shift; to be able to support one's self.
Fending, a shift, a bare support.
Fent, an opening left at the bottom of a shirt or sleeve.
Ferlie, or *ferley*, to wonder; a wonder; a term of contempt.
Fernyer, the last year.
Ferry, a sow's litter.
Fetch, to pull by fits.
Fetch't, pulled intermittently.
Fettle, energy, the power of exertion.
Fey, strange; one marked for death, predestined, foe.
Fidden, a load of a certain weight.
Fiddle, to trifle at work.
Fidge, to fidget; fidgeting.
Fidgin-fain, tickled with pleasure.
Fiel, soft, smooth.
Fien-ma-care, the devil may care.
Fient, fiend; a petty oath.
Fient-a-bit, devil-a-bit.
Fier, sound, healthy; a brother; a friend.
Fierrie, bustle, activity.
File, to dirty, to defile.
Filibeg, or *philibeg*, a kilt.
Filler, a funnel for filling with.
Findy, solid, substantial.
Fire-flaught, a flash of lightning.
First-fit, the person who first enters a house on New-year's day, and who is expected not to come empty-handed, otherwise it is considered ominous of misfortune.
Fissle, or *fistle*, to make a rustling; to fidget; bustle, fuss.
Fit, a foot; able.
Fitch, to move, to remove.
Fitsted, the print of the foot.
Fittie-lan,' the nearer horse of the hindmost pair in the plough.
Fivesum, five at once.
Flacht, a handful.
Flaff, a breath of wind, such as is caused by a fan; to flap or flutter.
Flaffen, flaffin, fluttering.
Flaws, flashes, as of wind and fire.
Flainen, or *flannan*, flannel.
Flait, scolded.
Flandrekins, foreign generals, soldiers of Flanders.
Flane, an arrow.
Flang, threw with violence.
Flaught, or *flechan*, a sudden blast of wind, a flake, a handful.
Flaughter, to cut turf from the ground.
Flaw, a soft expression for a lie.
Flawgairies, or *fleegairies*, gewgaws, whimsies, fancies.
Flech, a flea.
Fleckert, freckled.
Flee, a fly; to fly as a bird.
Fleesh, a fleece.
Fleetch, fleech, to supplicate in a flattering manner.
Fleetchin, supplicating.
Fleg, a kick, a random blow; a fright; to frighten.
Flet, did chide.
Flether, to decoy by fair words.
Fletherin, flethers, flattering; smooth wheedling words.
Flett, a saucer.
Fleuk, a flounder.
Flewet, a small blow.
Fley, fley'd, to scare, to frighten.
Fleyt, afraid, or terrified.
Flicher, flichter, to flutter, to startle, or alarm.
Flichtering, fluttering.
Flinders, shreds, broken pieces, splinters.
Fling, to kick, to throw off; to jilt; a species of dance peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland.
Flingin-tree, a piece of timber used as a partition between horses; a flail.
Flird, to flounce, to flaunt.
Flirds, vain finery.
Flisk, to fret under the yoke.
Fliskit, fretted.
Flit, to remove from one house to another.
Flitter, to flutter.
Flittering, fluttering, vibrating, moving tremulously from place to place.
Flocht, a flight, a sudden gust of passion, a sudden change of opinion.
Flochty, flighty, unsteady, easily angered.
Flory, an empty, vain, ostentatious person.
Flunkie, a servant in livery.
Flurrish, a blossom; to blossom.
Flushes, floods.
Fluther, hurry, bustle, confusion.
Flype, a flap, a shred; to turn outside in.
Flyte, to scold; *flyting*, scolding.
Fochten, distressed, fatigued.
Fodgel, squat and plump.
Fog, moss.
Foggie, a garrison soldier, one advanced in life, a dolt, a species of humble-bee.
Fon, fond.
Foor, hastened.
Foord, a ford; to ford.
Foordays, the morning far advanced; fair day-light.
Foorsday, Thursday.
Forbye, besides.
Forebears, forefathers, ancestors.
Foregainst, opposite to.
Forenent, forenens, over against.
Forespeak, to bode ill to one, to bespeak.
Forespoken, boded ill to.
Forfairn, distressed; worn out, jaded, forlorn, destitute.
Forfoughten, fatigued.
Forgather, to meet, to encounter with.
Forgettie, apt to forget.
Forgie, to forgive.
Forjesket, jaded with fatigue.
Forleet, to forget, to forsake, to abandon.
Forpet, the one-fourth part of a peck.
Forret, furret, forward; to further.
Forscomfish't, overcome with heat or exertion.
Fou, fu', full; drunk.
Foughten, troubled, harassed.
Foul-fa'-ye, ill befall ye.
Foul-thief, the devil, the arch-fiend.
Foumart, a polecat.
Founder, to stun by a blow; to stumble.
Fourhours, a slight repast, once taken at four o'clock, now applied to tea.
Fourneukit, quadrangular.
Foursome, four together.
Fous, the house leek.
Fousum, nauseous, surfeiting.
Fouth, plenty, enough, or more than enough.
Fouty, mean, base.
Fow, a measure, a bushel; also a pitchfork.
Fowk, fowks, folk, folks.

Foy, a bon aller.
Foxy, spungy.
Frae, from; off.
Fraise, to flatter, to commend.
Frammit, strange, estranged from, at enmity with.
Fraught, a freight; to freight.
Freath, *freeth*, or *fraeth*, froth; the frothing of ale in the tankard.
Freck, stout, firm, generally applied to strong aged people.
Freets, superstitious opinions.
Freik, a troublesome person, a petulant youth.
Freiks, impertinent foolish fancies.
Fremm, *fremmit*, foreign, not akin.
Frien', friend.
Frightsome, frightful.
Frist, to trust; *fristed*, trusted.
Frow, *frowdie*, a lusty woman.
Frush, brittle; hasty in temper.
Fu', full.
Fud, the scut, or tail of the hare, cony, &c.
Fudgie, gross, fat.
Fuff, to blow intermittently; a sudden displeasure.
Fuff't, did blow.
Fuffle, to put in disorder.
Fu-han't, full-handed; well to live in the world.
Fulyie, foul matter.
Funk, a blow; to wince as a horse does.
Funnie, full of merriment.
Fur, a furrow.
Fur-ahin, the hindmost horse on the right hand when ploughing.
Further, further.
Furlet, four pecks.
Furm, a form, a bench.
Furthy, affable, cheerful, frank.
Fusion, strength, taste, spirit.
Fusionless, spiritless, without sap or soul.
Fustit, that has lost its strength, or decayed in its substance.
Fyfteen, fifteen.
Fyke, trifling cares; to piddle, to be in a fuss about trifles.
Fykefacks, whimsies which are troublesome to others.
Fyle, to soil, to dirty.
Fyl't, soiled, dirtied.

G

GA', did give.
Gab, the mouth, talk, chat; to speak boldly, or pertly.
Gabbit, did talk.
Gabby, talkative.
Gaberlunzie, *gaberlunzieman*, one who carries a wallet.
Gad, or *gaud*, a rod or goad.
Gadge, a rule, a gauge; to dictate in an imperious manner.
Gadsman, or *gaudsman*, a plough-boy, the boy that drives the horses in the plough.
Gae, to go; *gaed*, went; *gane* or *gaen*, gone; *gaun*, going.
Gaet, or *gate*, way, manner, road.
Gaff, or *gawf*, to laugh loud.
Gaffa, hearty loud laughter.
Gair, or *gare*, intent on gain, niggardly.
Gairfish, the tortoise.
Gairs, triangular pieces of cloth sewed on the bottom of a gown.
Gaistlin, a young goose, a term of disparagement to a child.
Gaist, or *ghaist*, a ghost, a spirit, a piece of dead coal.
Gait, a goat.
Gallant, large, jolly.
Galloway, a small horse.
Galore, plenty.
Gamrel, *gomeril*, an idle foolish person.
Gan, begun.
Gane, gone.
Gang, go; to go, to walk.
Gang, *as of water*, as much as is brought from the well at one time.
Gangrel, a wandering person; creeping; applied also to creeping vermin.
Gansel, or *ganshel*, snappish language.
Gansh, a snap made at anything with the teeth; to snap at anything as a dog.
Gappocks, or *gabbocks*, mouthfuls.
Gar, to force.
Garse, or *gerse*, grass.
Gar't, forced to; caused.
Garter, a garter.
Garvie, a small fish.
Gash, wise, sagacious; talkative; to converse.
Gashgabbit, or *gash-beard*, long-chinned, loquacious, shrewd.
Gatty, failing in body.
Gauey, *gawsie*, jolly, plump, large, buxom.
Gaunt, or *gant*, a yawn; to yawn.
Gaunted, yawned, longed.
Gavel, the gable of a house.
Gaw, to gall; to take the pet.
Gawkie, half-witted, foolish, romping.
Gawp up, to swallow up greedily.
Gayly, or *gailies*, in tolerable health, pretty well.
Gear, riches; goods of any kind.
Gebbie, the craw or crop of a fowl, used sometimes for the throat of a human being.
Geck, to toss the head in wantonness or scorn.
Gee, a fit of obstinacy or sulkiness.
Geen, the wild cherry.
Gell, to ache.
Gellin', aching.
Gentles, great folks, gentry.
Genty, elegantly formed, neat.
Geordie, George, a guinea, called *Geordie* from the head of King George.
Get, or *geat*, a child; a brat, spoken contemptuously.
Getlin, a child.
Ghaist, a ghost; *ghaistis*, ghosts.
Gibbie-gabble, foolish; nonsense.
Gie, to give; *gied*, gave; *gien*, given.
Gif, if.
Gift-gaff, exchange of gifts.
Giftie, diminutive of gift.
Gig, a fit of humour, a whimsy; a charm, a curiosity, an ingenious artifice.
Gillie, or *gilloc*, diminutive of gill.
Gilligachus, or *gilligawpie*, a staring gaping fool; a gormandizer.
Gilpey, *gilpy*, a half-grown romping lad, a hoyden.
Gimmer, a ewe from one to two years old; also a term of reproach, or familiarity to a woman.
Gin, if, against.
Gipsy, a young girl.
Gird, or *gir*, a girth, a hoop.
Gird, a blow; to strike; to keep fast to a thing.
Girdle, a round iron plate on which oatcake is fired.
Gire-carlin, a giant's wife.
Girn, a snare or trap; a grin; to grin.
Girnel, a meal chest; to lay up in a granary.
Girnigo-gibbie, a fretful child.
Girnin', grinning, fretful.
Girsle, gristle.
Girt, great; a girth; *girt of the leg*, the calf of the leg.
Girth, a hoop.
Gite, enraged, outrageously; giddy.
Gizz, a periwig; the face.
Glaik, to fool, to wanton, to trifle.
Glaikit, inattentive, foolish.
Glaiks, the reflection of the sun thrown from a mirror; an idle good-for-nothing fellow. *To give the glaiks*, to beguile one, by giving him his labour for his pains; to trick, to jilt.
Glaister, to bawl, to bark.
Glaize, a warm at a fire; *to glaize*, to graze in passing.
Glaizie, glittering, smooth like glass.
Glaum, a snatch at; to grope or grasp at; *glaumed*, grasped, snatched at eagerly.
Glaumour, or *glaumer*, incantation, a fascinating spell in order to deceive the eyes.
Glaur, or *glar*, mire, ousy mud.
Gleck, sharp, ready.
Gled, a hawk.
Gley, sharp-sighted, ready-witted, quick of apprehension.
Gleib, *glieb*, glebe.
Gleib o' lan, a portion of ground. The ground belonging to a manse is called "the gleib," or portion.
Glen, a dale, a deep valley.
Gley, or *glee*, a squint, to squint; *a-gley*, off at a side, wrong; *gley'd*, squinting.
Gleyde, an old horse.
Glib, quick, ready in speaking.
Glib-gabbit, smooth and ready in speech.
Gliffin, a surprise, a sudden glow of heat.
Glint, to peep; a peep, a glance; *glinted*, peeped; *glintin*, peeping.
Glisk, a transient view, a glimpse.
Gloamin, the twilight.
Gloamin-shot, twilight musing; a shot in the twilight.
Gloit, a lubberly inactive person.
Gloss, a fire of red embers without flame.
Gloum, a frown; to frown.
Glout, to pout.
Glowr, to stare; a stare, a look; *glowred*, stared; *glowran*, amazed, gazing suspiciously.
Glum, displeased.
Glundy, a fool, an inactive person.
Glunsh, *glunch*, a frown, a sour look; to frown.
Glunshoch, a sulky person.
Goan, a wooden dish.
Goavan, *goavin*, looking round with a strange inquiring gaze.
Golach, or *goloch*, an earwig.
Gorble, to devour quickly.
Gor-cock, the red game, red cock, or moor-cock.
Gore, hardened rheum in the eye.
Gore, or *gair*, a piece of cloth of a triangular form, generally cut off from the cloth of a shift, &c., in order to make them wider at the bottom than at the top.
Gossie, or *goss*, a gossip.
Gou, to emit the earliest sound an infant does in expressing happiness.
Gove, to stare; to bellow and cry.
Gowan, the flour of the wild daisy, dandelion, hawkweed, &c.

Gowany, abounding with daisies.
Gowd, gold; *gowden*, golden.
Gowdie, head; *heels ov'r gowdie*, heels over head.
Gowdspink, a goldfinch.
Gowff, a fool; the game of golf; a blow.
Gowff'd, struck.
Gowk, a cuckoo; a fool; *gowk's errand*, a fool's errand.
Gowl, howl; to scold loudly and angrily.
Gowp, a gulp, a large mouthful; to gulp.
Gowpen, the two hands joined to contain anything, as grain, &c., also the quantity so contained.
Gowpin, gulping.
Gowstly, ghastly.
Graft, *graff*, a grave; to engraft.
Grain, or *grane*, a groan; to groan; *grain'd* and *gruntit*, groaned and grunted; *graining*, groaning.
Graip, a pronged instrument for cleaning cowhouses.
Graith, accoutrements, furniture, dress, harness.
Gramashes, riding hose.
Grane, to groan.
Grange, a granary, a farm-house.
Grannie, grandmother.
Grape, to grope; *grapet*, groped.
Grat, wept, shed tears.
Graybeard, a stone bottle.
Grays, coleworts and cabbages mashed together, a dish used by country people in Scotland.
Great, or *grit*, intimate, familiar.
Gree, to agree; *to bear the gree*, to be decidedly victor; *gree't*, agreed; *wun the gree*, supremacy.
Green, to long for.
Greens, coleworts.
Green-graff, green grave.
Greeshoch, a fire of red embers without flame.
Greet, to shed tears, to weep.
Greetin, crying, weeping.
Grieve, an overseer.
Grippet, catched, seized.
Grippy, avaricious.
Grist, a miller's fee for grinding.
Groanin-maut, drink for the cummers at a lying in.
Groat, fourpence; *to get the whistle of one's groat*, to play a losing game.
Groats, milled oats.
Groozle, to breathe with difficulty, applied generally to children.
Gropsy, a glutton.
Grou, to shudder with loathing, ugly.
Grouff, to sleep in a disturbed manner; a short disturbed sleep.
Grousome, loathsome, frightful, disgusting.
Growble, to swallow hastily.
Grozet, or *grosart*, a gooseberry.
Grumph, a grunt; to grunt.
Grumphie, or *grumphin*, a sow; an angry pig.
Grun, ground.
Grunds, sediment.
Grundstane, a grindstone.
Gruntle, the phiz, the snout, a grunting noise.
Grunzie, a mouth which pokes out like that of a pig.
Gruppit, sprained.
Grushie, thick; of thriving growth.
Grutten, wept, cried.
Gryse, or *greive*, a pig.
Guddle, to mangle, to haggle.
Gude, the Supreme Being; good, kind.
Gude auld-has-been, was once excellent.
Gudes, *guids*, commodities or stock.
Gudgie, thick and short.
Guff, an inhalation of smoke or vapour.
Guid-e'en, good evening.
Guidfaither and *guidmither*, father-in-law and mother-in-law.
Guidman and *guidwife*, the master and mistress of the house; *young guidman*, a man newly married.
Guid-mornin, good morrow.
Guidwilly, liberal-hearted.
Gule, wild marigold.
Gulravage, *gilravage*, confused scamper, noisy frolic.
Guller, see *Buller*.
Gully, or *gullie*, a large knife.
Gum, a dispute, a misunderstanding.
Gumlie, or *gumly*, muddy.
Gumlie jaups, muddy drift.
Guran, a tumour, a boil.
Gurly, cold, rough, boisterous.
Gusty, or *gustfu'*, tasteful.
Gutcher, grandsire.
Gutsy, gluttonous.
Gut-scraper, a fiddler.
Gutters, mire, puddles.
Guttery, miry.
Gutty, big-bellied, thick.
Guzzorn, the gizzard.
Gyse, to disguise.
Gytlin, a child. See *Getlin*.
Gyzarts, people disguised.
Gyzen, *gizzen*, to shrink with dryness as a cask; *gyzent*, shrunk.

H

HA', have; *I wad ha' gaen*, I would have gone.
Ha', a hall.
Ha' Bible, the great Bible that lies in the hall.
Havers, halvers, a copartnery between two, in which each shares equally. Only used among young people, or in affectation.
Habber, to stutter.
Habble, or *hobble*, a mob, a fight, a wrangle, a confusion, a difficulty; to hobble, to walk lamely.
Hacks, chops in the hands or feet.
Haddie, a haddock.
Haddin', house, home, dwelling-place, a possession.
Hadna, or *hadnae*, had not.
Hae, to have, to accept.
Haen, had (the participle of *hae*), haven.
Haerst, or *hairst*, harvest.
Haet, the smallest quantity.
Haet, *fient haet*, a petty oath of negation; nothing; the devil have it.
Haff, half.
Haffet, *hauffet*, the temple, the side of the head.
Hafflins, nearly half, partly, not fully grown.
Hag, a gulf in mosses and moors, moss ground.
Hagabag, huckaback, coarse napery.
Haggis, a large pudding peculiar to Scotland.
Haggle-bargle, or *aurgle-bargle*, keen wrangling in cheapening a thing.
Haik, to go about idly from place to place.
Hail, whole, sound, healthy.
Hailscart, wholly sound, wholly unhurt, the total.
Hain, to use sparingly, to save, to lay out at interest.
Hain'd, spared.
Hainsh, the haunch.
Hair, a small quantity.
Hairshaw, the hairlip.
Hairumscarum, wildness, irregularity, nonsense, any foolish enthusiastic pursuit; hairbrained.
Haist, haste.
Haistert, hurried.
Haith, a petty oath, in faith.
Hallan, a particular partition wall in a cottage, or more properly a seat of turf at the outside.
Hallanshaiker, a tatterdemalion.
Hallions, clowns.
Haly, holy.
Haly-pool, holy well with healing qualities.
Hame, home.
Hameart, or *haimart*, domestic, home-made, home-bred.
Hameliness, frankness, affability, homeliness, unaffectedness.
Hamely, homely, frank, affable, unaffected.
Han', or *haun*, hand.
Hand-afore, the fore horse on the left hand in a plough.
Hand-ahin, the last horse on the left hand in a plough.
Han's breed, hand's breadth.
Handsel, or *hansel*, the first gift received on a holiday, or compliment on wearing a new dress.
Handsel-Monday, or *Hansel-Monday*, the first Monday after New Year's day.
Hand-waled, hand picked.
Hankle. See *Fankle*.
Hanks, thread as it comes from the measuring reel, quantities, &c.
Hansel-throne, throne when first occupied by a king.
Hantle, a great quantity.
Hanty, convenient, handsome.
Hap, a warm outer garment; to wrap, to cover.
Happer, the hopper of a mill.
Happing, hopping.
Hap-shackled; when the fore and hind foot of cattle are fastened together to prevent leaping, they are said to be *hapshackled*. A wife is called "the kirk's hap-shackle."
Hap-step-an'-loup, hop step and leap.
Hardlies, scarcely.
Harigals, the pluck of an animal.
Harkit, or *harkent*, hearkened, whispered, did whisper.
Harl, to drag; to give a coating of lime and sand to the outer wall of a building.
Harn, very coarse linen.
Harnpan, the skull.
Harns, brains.
Harskip, *herschip*, ruin.
Hartsome, cheerful.
Hash, a lazy, slovenly fellow; to slash, to abuse, to maltreat.
Hasp, or *hesp*, a quantity of reeled yarn.
Hassock, a great bunch, as of hair, &c.
Haster, to perplex, to vex and tease a person.

Hastit, hastened.
Hastow, hast thou.
Hatter, a rush of pimples, a collection of scales.
Haud, to hold, to keep, to support.
Hauf-mark marriage, a clandestine marriage.
Hauf-marrow, a husband or wife.
Hauf-wuttit, foolish,
Haught, to make an effort, to bring phlegm up the throat.
Haur, a fog, a mist.
Haurl, *haurlin*, to drag, to pull roughly.
Haury, foggy, misty.
Hause, the throat.
Hausebane, the collar bone.
Hauslock, the wool that grows on the sheep's neck.
Havermeal, oatmeal.
Havins, good manners, decorum, good sense.
Hawkie, a cow, properly one with a white face.
Hazle rung, a stick.
Heal, health.
Healsome, healthful, wholesome.
Heapit, heaped.
Hearse, hoarse.
Hech, oh! strange; an expression of fatigue.
Hecht, promised; to foretell something that is to be got or given; foretold; the thing foretold; offered.
Heck, a hay rack in a stable.
Heckling, a hackling, a nettling, rough usage.
Hee balou, words used to soothe a child.
Heels-owre-head, *heels-owre-gowdie*, topsy-turvy, turned the bottom upwards.
Heepie, a listless or melancholy person.
Heer, a certain quantity of reeled yarn.
Heeze, to elevate, to raise, to lift.
Heezie, motion in a swing, or over the top of a wave.
Heftit, accustomed to live in a place.
Heigh, high.
Hellim, the rudder or helm.
Hempy, a tricky youth, as one for whom the hemp grows.
Hen-shin'd, shot ancles like a hen.
Here awa, in this quarter.
Herrin', a herring.
Herry, to plunder; most properly to plunder birds' nests.
Herryment, plundering, devastation.
Hersel', herself.
Hesp, a clasp, a hook; to fasten or strengthen with a clasp.
Het-pint, a beverage presented on a New-Year's day morning by the first-fit. See *First-fit*.
Het-skin, a sound beating on the hips.
Hether-bells, the blossoms of the heath.
Hethery, heathy.
Heugh, a craig, a ravine; *coal heugh*, a coal pit; *lowin heugh*, a blazing pit.
Hiddils, lurking places.
Hiddlins, by stealth, secretly.
Hiddrick, the head ridge on which a plough turns.
Hiddy-giddy, *hirdy-girdie*, confused, giddy, wanton; also an instrument fixed on the trace between two bullocks to keep them from resting on one another.
Highlan, or *heelan*, highland.
Hilch, a hobble; to halt; *hilchin*, halting.
Hilt-an'-hair, every part of a thing.
Hiltie-skiltie, in rapid succession.
Hinderen, the close, the hind end.
Hinderlets, the hind parts.
Hindmast, the last.
Hing, to hang any thing; to be in the state of hanging.
Hinney, honey.
Hint, or *ahint*, behind.
Hip, the act of missing, or passing over; to miss, to pass over.
Hippin, a towel wrapt about the hips of an infant.
Hirple, to walk crazily, to walk lamely, to creep.
Hirsel, *hissel*, or *hirdsel*, a flock.
Hirsle, to move with a rustling noise, to slide on the breech.
Histy, or *hirsty*, dry, chapped, barren.
Hit, it, in vulgar conversation.
Hite, or *hyte*, mad, enraged, excessively keen.
Hivy, rich, in comfortable circumstances.
Hizzie, *huzzy*, a young girl.
Hoast, cough.
Hobble, to dangle on the knee.
Hobble-shew, or *hubble-shew*, a rabble, a crowd, a confusion.
Hoch-hey, an expression of grief or fatigue.
Hocus, a stupid person.
Hod, to jog as a person on horse.
Hodden gray, woollen cloth of a coarse quality, made by mingling one black fleece with a dozen white ones.
Hoddin, the motion of a countryman riding on a cart-horse; humble.
Hoeshins, footless stockings.
Hog, a cant name for a shilling.
Hoggie, a two-year old sheep.
Hogmanay, the expression used by children, who go about begging on the last day of the year; also the name given to the day itself, or to a present given or received on that day.
Hogscore, a distance line in curling, drawn across the rink. When a stone fails to cross it, a cry is raised of "A hog, a hog," and it is removed.
Hogshouther, a kind of horse play, by jostling with the shoulder; to jostle.
Hoise, to lift up, to hoist.
Hollen, the holly shrub.
Honner, honour.
Hoodie-craw, a species of crow.
Hoodock, miserly.
Hool, the husk; to shell, to deprive of the husk.
Hoolie, slowly, leisurely.
Hoolie! take time, stop.
Hoord, a hoard; to hoard.
Hoordit, hoarded.
Horl, a small iron or wooden ring used as a pulley.
Hornie, one of the many names of the devil.
Hornmad, quite mad.
Horsecowper, a horsedealer.
Hosenet, a small net, a difficulty.
Host, or *hoast*, to cough; a cough.
Hotch, a moving up and down, a jerk; to move up and down, to move as a collection of maggots.
Hotch'd, turned topsy turvy; blended, mixed.
Hotchpotch, hodgepodge, any confused mixture.
Hou, a roof-tree; to hoot.
Hough, low, mean; to throw a stone.
Houghmagandie, fornication.
Houlet, or *howlet*, an owl.
Housal, domestic, household.
Housie, diminutive of house.
Hout! tut! fy!
Houtfy! for shame.
Hove, to heave, to swell.
Hov'd, heaved, swelled.
Howd, to hide, to conceal.
Howder't, hidden.
Howdie, a midwife.
Howe, hollow; a hollow; to hollow.
Howebackit, sunk in the back, spoken of a horse, &c.
Howff, a tippling house; a house of resort.
Howk, to dig; *howkit*, dug, hollowed; *howkin*,' digging deep.
Howm, a plain, a flat by a river side.
Howp, hope; to hope.
How-towdie, a young hen.
Hoy, to urge; *hoy't*, urged, inveigled.
Hoyse, to pull upwards.
Hoyte, to move clumsily.
Hubble-shew. See *Hobble-shew*.
Huchyalled, *huchall'd*, to move with a hilch.
Hud, the trough used by masons for carrying lime, a hod.
Huggers, coarse stockings without feet.
Huggrymuggry, clandestine conduct; clandestinely.
Hughoc, diminutive of Hughie, as Hughie is of Hugh.
Huirdin, hoarding, saving.
Hullion, a sloven.
Hum, a flam, a quiz, a trick; to trick, to deceive.
Humlock, a small rising ground, a hard heap of earth, &c.
Hums and *hankers*, mumbles and seeks to do what he cannot perform.
Hummilt, having no horns.
Humph, to begin to putrify.
Humph'd, becoming putrid.
Humstrum, a pet, a fit of sulkiness.
Hund, a hound.
Hunder, or *hunner*, a hundred.
Hunker, to crouch, to squat on the hams.
Hunkers, the hams.
Hurcheon, a hedgehog.
Hurdies, the buttocks.
Hure, a whore.
Huredow, whoredom.
Hurkle, *hurdle*, to draw one's self together in a couching manner as a dog asleep.
Hurlebarrow, a wheelbarrow.
Hurroe, holla! a cheer, a holla.
Hushion, a cushion; a stocking leg worn on the arms in winter.
Hussle, to shove with a rustling noise, to rustle.
Hussle-bussle, a confusion.
Hutch, a cottage, a deep pool, a measure of coals.
Huther, or *hudder*, to work confusedly.
Hutherin, confused, doing any thing confusedly.
Hutheron, a slatternly woman.
Hyjinks, drinking by lot.
Hyres, a particular sort of eruption affecting children.

I

I', in.
Ice-shoggles, icicles.
Icker, an ear of corn.
Idleset, idleness.
Ieroe, a great grandchild.
Ilk, same as Macnab of that *ilk*, Macnab of Macnab.
Ilk, or *ilka*, each, every.

Ill-deedy, mischievous.
Ill-far'd, ill-favoured.
Ill-guetit, having bad habits.
Ill-less, harmless; neither good nor ill.
Ill-o't, awkward at it.
Ill-scrapit-tongue, an ill tongue, bad language.
Ill-willy, ill-natured, malicious, illiberal, unwilling to oblige.
In, in friendship.
Inch, a small island.
Income, an affection of any part of the body not arising from outward injury.
Ingan, an onion.
Ingine, genius, ingenuity.
Ingle, fire; fire-place.
Ingle-cheek, the fireside.
Ingle-gleede, fireside blaze.
Ingle-lowe, light from the fire; flame from the hearth.
Inlake, deficiency, shortcoming; to fall short of weight or measure.
Inlying, child-bearing.
Inowr, in and over; an invitation from an individual to come *inowr*, is to enter their house.
I rede ye, I advise ye, I warn ye.
Instriking, the disappearance of an eruption in consequence of its being thrown back into the habit by cold or absorption.
Intack, a contraction, as by sewing; a cheat, a circumvention.
Interdick, to interdict; *interdickit*, interdicted.
Intill, into, within.
Inwith, inwards.
I's, *I* am.
I'se, I shall or will.
Isk, or *iskie*, the call given to a dog.
Isna, or *isnae*, is not.
Ither, other; one another.
Itsel', itself.
Izles, embers.

J

JABBLE, soup; a large blunt needle or knife.
Jad, or *jaud*, jade; a giddy young girl.
Jag, a prick as with a pin; to prick as with a pin.
Jauk, to waste one's time idly, to trifle.
Jaukin, trifling, dallying.
Jaumph, to travel with exertion as if on bad roads.
Jauner, *jaunder*, talking idly.
Jaup, a jerk of water; to jerk, as agitated water.
Jaw, a wave or dash of water, a large quantity of any liquid, or dash of it; to throw out any liquid forcibly.
Jawp, to bespatter with mire, to throw water upon.
Jawpit, bespattered, &c.
Jee, to incline or move to one side.
Jeel, to congeal.
Jeel, or *jeelie*, jelly.
Jeest, a joist, a jest.
Jelouse, to suspect, to be jealous of.
Jessie, or *jaisie*, a wig.
Jiffin, or *jiffie*, an instant.
Jig, or *jeeg*, to creak, to fiddle, to scoff at.
Jillet, a jilt, a giddy girl.
Jimps, easy stays.
Jinglan, jingling.
Jink, to turn suddenly when pursued, to avoid a blow by stooping hastily or turning aside, to give the slip to.
Jink an' diddle, moving to music, motion of a fiddler's elbow.
Jinker, that turns quickly, a gay sprightly girl.
Jinkin', dodging, the quick motion of the bow on the fiddle.
Jinks, sports.
Jirg, to creak, to grind the teeth.
Jirk, or *jirt*, a jerk.
Jo, a sweetheart.
Jockey-coat, a great-coat.
Jockteleg, a large clasp knife.
Jogtrot, a slow jolting motion on horseback, pertinacious adherence to a practice or opinion.
Joggle, a jogging from side to side; to jog from side to side.
Jouk, a crouch, a stoop; to bow or stoop to avoid a blow, or to conceal one's self.
Joukery-paukery, juggling, roguery.
Jow, to toll, to spill from a vessel by moving the contents; the undulation of water.
Jowler, a bull dog.
Juggs, a punishment, in which the culprit has an iron collar round his neck, which is fastened by a chain to the wall.
Jundie, to jostle, to push with the elbow.
Junnice, a jostle, a blow, a jog.
Junny, to jog, to shake a vessel with liquor so as to produce the sound occasioned by the dashing of the liquor within it.
Junt, a large piece, generally of butcher meat.
Jupe, a woman's short gown.
Jurr'd, a journeyman or journeywoman.
Jute, sour or dead liquor; jade.
Jybe, a taunt; to taunt.

K

KAE, a jack-daw.
Kaiber, a rafter.
Kail, colewort; a kind of broth.
Kail-brose, potage made of oatmeal and the oily scum of the above soup.
Kail-custock, the stem of cabbages or coleworts.
Kail-gully, a large knife used for cutting kail.
Kail-pat, a pot for boiling broth.
Kail-runt, the hardest part of the stem of the colewort.
Kail-stock, a colewort plant.
Kailwife, a woman who sells vegetables.
Kailworm, a species of caterpillar which feeds on the leaves of the colewort and cabbage.
Kailyard, a kitchen garden.
Kain, *kane*, fowls, &c., paid as rent by a farmer.
Kaive, to walk with an awkward swaggering motion.
Kame, a comb; to comb.
Kanny, or *canny*, fortunate; also wary, one who manages his affairs discreetly; cautious.
Katy-handit, or *kaury-handit*, left-handed.
Keb, a blow.
Kebars, rafters.
Kebbuck, a cheese.
Keckle, a cackle, a laugh, a vaunt, a vapouring; to cackle, to giggle, to titter, to boast.
Kedgie, fond, happy.
Kee, *key*, humour, a pier or harbour.
Keek, a peep; to peep.
Keek-bo, bo-peep.
Keekin'-glass, a mirror.
Keel, red or black chalk.
Keelyvine, blacklead, a blacklead pencil.
Keepit, kept.
Keist, did cast.
Kell, the crown piece of a woman's cap.
Kelpies, a sort of mischievous water-spirit, said to haunt fords and ferries at night, especially in storms; also a term of reproach to a mischievous young person.
Kelt, coarse cloth with the nap on it.
Kelty, a large bumper, another glass imposed as by way of punishment on one who infringes on the etiquette understood to be established in a convivial party.
Kemp, to strive in working; a champion.
Ken, to know, not to be in doubt; *kend*, or *kent*, knew.
Kendlin, any live combustible or match for lighting up a fire.
Kenna, or *kennae*, know not.
Kennin, knowing, an increase in bulk or quantity which is just perceivable, and no more.
Kensna, knows not.
Kenspeckle, that may be easily recognized, remarkable in appearance.
Kent, a long staff or stick.
Kep, to catch any thing that is thrown, to stop or oppose the passage of any person or thing, to receive any thing which is poured or runs out, to meet with.
Ket-ketty, matted, hairy; a fleece of wool.
Kevel, lot.
Kew, a clew, a queue; to clew up.
Keytch, to toss, as if any light body were kicked up by the foot.
Kiaugh, carking, anxiety; to be in a flutter.
Kicky, saucy, repulsive, ostentatious.
Kilt, killed.
Killogie, an open space before a kiln fire.
Kilt, a filibeg, a tuck; to tuck; to truss up the clothes.
Kiltit, tucked, dressed with the filibeg.
Kimmer, a female gossip, a term of contempt used to a woman.
Kin', kind, friendly; sort.
Kinch, a noose.
King's-hood, a certain part of the entrails of an ox, &c.
Kink, a fit of coughing; to cough.
Kinkoch, or *kinkhost*, the hooping cough.
Kinnin, a rabbit.
Kintry, or *kintra*, country.
Kintra-cooser, country stallion.
Kip, a bawdyhouse; to play the truant.
Kipper, cured salmon.
Kipple, a couple; to couple; to wed.
Kirk, a church; to attend one to church the first time of going there after marriage, child-bearing, or the loss of a husband, wife, or child; to go to church the first time that attendance is given there after any of the above events.
Kirn, the harvest supper; a churn; to churn.
Kirn-milk, butter milk.
Kirnstaff, an instrument used for agitating the milk in churning.
Kirsen, to christen or baptize.
Kirsenin' a christening.
Kirst, Christian (the name).
Kirstal, crystal.
Kiss caups, to pledge friendship.
Kist, a coffin, a chest; to put into a coffin, to store up in a chest; a counter.

Kistin', the ceremony or act of putting into a coffin or chest.
Kistit, coffined, chested.
Kitchen, anything that eats with bread; to serve for soup, gravy, &c.
Kitchen-fee, the drippings of roasting meat.
Kith, acquaintance.
Kitt, a number; *the hail kitt*, the whole number.
Kittle, to tickle; to accomplish; to bring forth kittens.
Kittlin, a kitten.
Kittlin', the act of bringing forth kittens.
Kittly, ticklish; hard to be understood, mysterious.
Kittly-coxt, hide-the-marc, a play among children, when something is searched for that has been concealed.
Knab, a person in comfortable circumstances, a person of dignity.
Knabby, wealthy, dignified.
Knackety, finical, fond of neatness.
Knacky, tricky, ingenious in trifles, witty, facetious.
Knag, a pin or peg to hang any thing on.
Knaggie, or *knaggy*, having protuberances.
Knap, a smart blow; to strike smartly.
Knap of the knee, the knee pan.
Knappin-hammer, a hammer for breaking stones.
Knaur, a knot in wood.
Knicht, a knight.
Knitten, tape.
Knock, a clock.
Knoit, a blow; to buffet, to beat, a large piece.
Knoof, or *knuif*, to chat familiarly, to be friendly.
Knoose, to bruise, to beat.
Knoost, or *knuist*, a lump of any eatable.
Knots. See *Mystic knots*.
Knowe, a small round hillock.
Knubblock, a knob, an induration, the swelling occasioned by a blow or fall.
Knurl, a dwarf.
Knurlin, crooked, but strong, knotty.
Koot, the ancle bone.
Koum, soot, coal-culm; to soil with soot.
Kounger, to snub, to overbear, to reprove harshly.
Kuittle, to cuddle.
Kuittlin, cuddling.
Kye, cows.
Kyte, the belly.
Kythe, to appear in one's own likeness as to reputation; to make a discovery of one's self, to be otherwise than one would appear.

L

LAB, to throw a stone with a swing of the arm, in the manner a quoit is thrown; to walk with a long swinging step.
Lack, to discommend, to depreciate.
Lackanee! alas!
Lad, a sweetheart.
Laddie, diminutive of *lad*.
Lade, a load, a water-way.
Lady-landers, a beautiful little insect, called in English lady-fly, or lady-bird.
Laggen, the angle between the side and the bottom of a wooden dish.
Laidner, a larder.
Laif, a loaf.
Laigger, to bespatter, to bemire.
Laigh, low.
Laiglen, a milking pail.
Lainsh, a launch; to launch.
Laip, to lap as a dog.
Lair, a layer or stratum; a burying place; to inter.
Lair, or *lear*, learning.
Laird, landlord, lord of the manor, the male heir to a property or estate.
Lairdship, an estate.
Lairing, wading and sinking in snow, mud, &c.
Laith, loath, impure.
Laithfu' or *lothfu'*, bashful, modest, sheepish.
Lake, lack, want.
Lallan, lowlandish, lowland.
Lallans, the Scottish dialect of the English language.
Lambie, or *lammie*, diminutive of lamb.
Lammer, or *laumer*, amber.
Lamp, to run with long steps.
Lampit, the limpet shell-fish.
Lan'-afore, foremost horse in the plough.
Lan'-ahin, hindmost horse in the plough.
Land-louper, an unsettled person who has not steadiness to remain fixed in one place.
Land-o'-the-leal, land of the faithful, heaven.
Lane, lone; *my lane*, *thy lane*, &c., myself alone.
Lanely, lonely.
Lang, long; *to think lang*, to long, to weary.
Lang-kail, boiled coleworts unmashed.
Lang-nebbit, having a long nose, acute; applied to learned or pedantic words.
Langsum, tedious.
Langsyne, ancient, long past, long ago.
Lang-tongued, given to babbling loudly; loquacious.
Lantron, a lantern.
Lap, did leap.
Lapper, to curdle; to clot; *lappert*, curdled, clotted.
Lapstane, the stone a shoemaker holds on his knee to beat his leather upon.
Lash, a smart shower.
Lass, a sweetheart.
Lassie, girl, diminutive of *lass*.
Lat, a hindrance; to hinder; to allow, to let.
Late and air, late and early.
Late-wauk, or *Lyke-wake*, the watching of a corpse before interment.
Laughan, *laughin*, laughing.
Laughter, or *lachter*, the whole eggs laid by a hen before she begins to sit on them for incubation.
Laun, or *lan'*, land, estate.
Lave, the rest, remainder, the others.
Laverock, the lark.
Law, a hill.
Lawborrows, a writ under which a person swears that he dreads harm from another, in his person or property, and by which that other is obliged to find caution to keep the peace.
Lawin, a tavern reckoning.
Lawlan, lowland.
Lay, that part of a weaver's loom in which the reed is fixed, which drives home the wool; to slay: to alleviate; to allay.
Lay my dead, attribute my death.
Lay on, to strike, to beat with repeated blows.
Lea', to leave.
Leal, loyal, true, faithful.
Lea-rig, grassy ridge.
Lear, learning.
Leddy, lady.
Lee, untilled land, an open grassy plain.
Leefu'-lane, or *lee-lane*, quite alone, single, without company.
Lee-lang, live-long.
Leem, *leme*, flame; to shine, to gleam.
Leep, to parboil, to cozen.
Leesh, silk twine, part of the mounting of a silk weaver's loom.
Leesum, or *leesome*, pleasant.
Leeve, to live.
Leeze-me-on, blessing on, recommend me to, how well I love.
Leish, to lash.
Leisin, lying.
Leister, *lister*, a three-pronged and barbed dart for striking fish.
Leit, to permit, delay, give a hint of.
Len, a loan; to lend.
Lends, the loins, the buttocks.
Lentren, Lent.
Let-be, to let alone; much less.
Let-gae, to raise a tune.
Let-on, to pretend, to give a hint of.
Lether, a ladder; *to lether any person*, to beat, to whip; *letherin*, a whipping.
Lett, a ticket put up on a house to show that it is to let.
Letter-gae, a precentor.
Leugh, did laugh.
Leuk, a look; to look.
Leuc, or *leuc-warm*, lukewarm.
Libber, a lubberly fellow; a gelder.
Libbit, gelded.
Lichts, the lungs.
Lichtly, to undervalue, to make light of.
Lick, a blow; a cheat, a wag; to strike, to beat, to whip, to chastise, to beat or overcome in fighting.
Licker, liquor.
Licks, correction, a beating.
Lie-in, to be in child-bed.
Lift, sky, firmament.
Likit, loved.
Lills, the holes of a wind instrument.
Lilt-aff, to drink off quickly.
Limmer, a strumpet.
Limms, the limbs.
Limp't, limped, hobbled.
Line, to impregnate, applied in general to the dog species.
Ling, to walk quickly with a long step.
Lingle, shoemakers' twine for sewing with.
Lingle-tailed, having the bottom of the clothes hanging tawdrily.
Link, to trip along; *linkin*, tripping along.
Links, the winding of a river, a flat common.
Linkumdoddie, an imaginary locality.
Linn, a waterfall, a cascade.
Lint, flax; *lint i' the bell*, flax in flower
Lintie, or *lintwhite*, a linnet.
Lippen, to depend upon, to trust to.
Lippie, the fourth part of a peck.
Lire, or *lure*, the breast, a dug, muscular flesh, the air, the complexion.
Lirk, a crease, a fold, a wrinkle; to fold, to wrinkle, to crease.
Lisk, the groin.
Lith, a joint.
Lithe, to thicken any thing a little by boiling; to grow thickish by boiling.
Liver, to deliver a vessel of her cargo.
Loan, the place of milking.
Loaning, lane.
Loch, a lake.
Lock, a small quantity.
Locker, to curl.

Loo, or *loe*, to love a person or thing; to be in love.
Loof, or *lufe*, the palm of the hand.
Looms, tools, instruments.
Loot, did let; *looten*, permitted.
Lootna, did not let.
Losh-man! rustic exclamation modified from Lord man.
Loun, a clown, a ragamuffin, a cunning rogue, a strumpet.
Lounder, a hard blow; to beat soundly, to give a hard blow to.
Loun's piece, the uppermost slice of a loaf.
Loup, *lowp*, leap startled with pain; a loop.
Louper-like, *lan-louper*, a stranger of a suspected character.
Loupie, crafty, deceitful, tricky.
Lout, to stoop, to bend to, to submit to, to condescend.
Lout-shouther't, round-shouldered.
Lowe, a flame; to flame.
Lowin', flaming; *lowin'-drouth*, burning desire for drink.
Lowne, calm, not windy, sheltered.
Lowpin-on-stane, a stone for mounting a horse by, or a small building for the same purpose.
Lowrie, name given to a fox, also the diminutive of Lawrence.
Lows'd, unbound, loosed.
Lowse, to loose.
Lozen, a pane of glass.
Luck, to shut up, to fasten, to inclose.
Lucken, shut up, inclosed; contracted.
Luckenbooths, name given to the old tolbooth of Edinburgh, and from thence to the buildings in its immediate vicinity.
Luckenhandit, close-handed, niggardly, illiberal.
Lucky, a grandmother; large weight or measure.
Luesom, or *luesum*, lovely, worthy to be loved.
Lug, the ear; the handle of a pot, a bait worm got in the sand; *at the lug of*, near to.
Lugget, having a handle.
Luggie, a small wooden dish with a handle.
Luik, a look; to look.
Lum, the chimney.
Lunch, a large piece of cheese, flesh, &c.
Lunt, smoke; to smoke.
Luntin, smoking.
Luppen, started, sprung as a board or hinge from its fastening; leapt.
Lurdon, a lazy woman.
Lure, rather, more willingly.
Luss, *lust*, or *lusk*, the yellow scurf on the heads of infants.
Lusty, fat.
Luve, love; to love.
Lyart, gray-haired, hoary.
Lythe, to thicken any liquid a little by boiling.

M

MACKLY, seemly, well proportioned.
Mae, more; the bleat of a sheep; to bleat as a sheep.
Magg, a cant word for a halfpenny.
Maggle, to mangle.
Mahoun, Satan, from Mahomet.
Maik, a halfpenny; a match, an equal.
Mail, or *Black Mail*, certain contributions levied, by robbers or marauding chiefs, for which they granted their protection.
Mailen, a farm.
Mair, more.
Maist, most.
Maista (*had*), had almost.
Maister, a master, an overmatch; urine; to overcome.
Maisterfu', powerful, fatiguing, overpowering.
Maistery, victory, superiority.
Maistly, mostly.
Mak', to make.
Makin, making.
Mak'sna, matters not.
Mall, Moll, Mary.
Mally, Molly.
Mamp, to mop, to nibble, to eat as a person who has no teeth.
Mane, a moan, a lamentation; to moan, to lament.
Mang, among.
Mangit, galled as with stripes, toil, or vexation.
Mank, a want.
Mansworn, perjured.
Mant, a stutter; to stutter.
Manteel, a mantle.
Map, to nibble as a sheep.
Marb, the marrow.
March, or *merch*, a landmark; border of lands.
Marches, part of a weaver's loom.
Margully, to mangle, to mar.
Marled, variegated; spotted.
Marmaid, a mermaid.
Marrow, a mate, an equal, without a fellow, as an odd glove; peerless.
Mar's year, the year 1715. Called *Mar's year* from the rebellion of Erskine, Earl of Mar.
Martial chuck, the soldier's camp-comrade, female companion.
Mashlum, or *meslin*, mixed grain.
Mask, to infuse, as tea; to mash, as malt, &c.; *maskin-loom*, mash vat; *maskin pat*, a tea-pot.
Maud, or *maud*, a plaid worn by shepherds, &c.
Maught, power, might.
Maughty, mighty, powerful; having maggots, as putrid flesh.
Mauk, or *mauch*, a maggot.
Maukin, a hare.
Maukrel, a mackarel.
Maun, or *man*, must; *maunna*, must not.
Maundrels, nonsense, foolish fancies or talk.
Mauner, to talk like one raving, to talk foolishly.
Maut, malt.
Mavis, the thrush.
Maw, to mow; *mawin*, mowing; *maw'd*, mowed.
Mawn, a small basket without a handle.
Mawsie, a stupid girl.
Mean, to discover a sense of pain; to show lameness; to bemoan.
Meer, *meare*, a mare.
Meikle, a great quantity; in a great degree.
Meith, a limit, a mark, a sign.
Melder, a load of corn, &c., sent to the mill to be ground.
Mell, a mallet; to maul; to meddle, to associate.
Melt, the spleen; to knock down.
Meltinblow, the finishing stroke.
Meltith, a meal of meat.
Melvie, to soil with meal.
Men', to mend, to amend.
Mennon, a minnow.
Mens, or *mends* (*to the*), amends, satisfaction; over and above.
Mense, discretion, good manners.
Mensefu', discreet, well-bred.
Menseless, ill-bred, rude, impudent.
Menzie, a crowd.
Merk, a sum of one shilling and three halfpence sterling.
Mess John, the parish priest.
Messan, *messin*, a small dog, a mongrel cur.
Middin, a dunghill.
Middin-creels, dung-baskets, panniers in which horses carry manure.
Middin-hole, a gutter at the bottom of a dunghill.
Middlins, moderately.
Midge, a gnat.
Milk, or *milks*, an annual entertainment given by a teacher to the scholars, and to which they contribute a small sum of money.
Milk, or *mulk*, to rook. To win all in one's possession, is to *milk* him.
Milkin'-shiel, a place where cows or ewes are brought to be milked.
Milkness, milk; the milk department; the produce of the dairy.
Mill, or *mull*, a snuff box.
Milsie, a hair scarce.
Mim, prim, affectedly meek.
Mim-mouth'd, gentle-mouthed.
Min', to remember.
Minawae, minuet.
Mind't, mind it; resolved, intending, remembered.
Minny, *minnie*, mother, dam.
Mint, an aim, an endeavour; to endeavour, to aim.
Mirk, dark; *mirkest*, darkest; *mirkness*, darkness.
Mirligoes, when the eyes reel with the effects of drinking, they are said to be in the *mirligoes*.
Mishehadden, improper, indiscreet; applied to expressions.
Misca', to nickname, to abuse by calling names; *misca'd*, abused.
Mishanter, distress, destruction.
Misken, not to know, to neglect, to overlook, not to take notice of one.
Mislear'd, mischievous, unmannerly.
Mislippen, to disappoint.
Misluck, misfortune.
Mismarrow, to mismatch.
Mistaen, mistaken.
Misteuk, mistook.
Mistryst one, to break an engagement.
Mith, might.
Mither, mother.
Mixtie-maxtie, confusedly mixed.
Mizzled, speckled.
Mizzles, the measles.
Moch, or *mochy*, damp, moist.
Mocht, becoming putrid.
Moistify, to moisten.
Molligrant, a grumbling, a murmuring, a whining.
Mononday, Monday.
Mony, or *monie*, many.
Monyplies, a part of the intestines of cattle.
Mool, dust, the earth of a grave; to crumble.
Moolins, crumbs.

Moop, to nibble as a sheep.
Moorlan', of or belonging to moors.
Moosty, or *muisty*, mouldy.
Mortclaith, a pall.
Mosscheeper, the titlark.
Motherwit, natural sense.
Mottie, *motty*, full of motes.
Mou', the mouth.
Moubit, a mouthful.
Moudiwort, a mole.
Moul, to mould.
Mouligrubs (to be in the), to be in a pouting ill-humour.
Mouly, mouldy.
Mouly-heels, chilblains on the heels.
Moup, *mowp*, to eat with a quick motion as a rabbit.
Mousie, diminutive of mouse.
Mousewabs, or *mousswabs*, cobwebs, phlegm in the throat.
Mout, to moult.
Mouter, grist, a miller's perquisite for grinding.
Mow, a heap, as of hay, fuel, sheaves of grain, &c.
Mows, jests.
Moy, gentle, modest, mild.
Muckle, or *mickle*, great, tall.
Muckmidden, a dunghill.
Muir, a moor, a heath.
Muirburn, a contest, a dispute.
Muist, mouldness; dust, hair-powder.
Muller, to crumble, to moulder.
Mummle, to mumble, to speak inwardly.
Mump, to give an indirect hint of one's meaning.
Mumpit-like, dull, stupid-like.
Munds, the mouth.
Munt, to mount.
Muntin, mounting; the whole of a weaver's apparatus.
Murgeon, a murmur, a taunt; to mock by making mouths.
Murgullie, or *margulyie*, to mismanage, to bungle, to abuse.
Murle, a crumb. See *Muller*.
Murlie, that can be crumbled; friable.
Muses-stank, muses rill, a stank, slow flowing water.
Musie, diminutive of muse.
Muslin-kail, thin poor broth, composed simply of water, shelled barley, and greens.
Mutch, a woman's cap, a coif.
Mutchkin, an English pint.
Mysel, myself, by myself.
Mystic knots, made by bridesmaids on the bride's night-dress. See "Address to the Deil."

N

NA, or *nae*, no, not, nor.
Nack, a trick. See *Knack*.
Nacket, a trifling little person; small in size.
Nackety. See *Knackety*.
Nacky, a kind of loaf. See *Knacky*.
Naething, or *naithing*, nothing.
Nag, a peg. See *Knag*.
Naig, a horse, a nag.
Nail (down on the), promptly paid, paid ready money.
Nail (aff at the), gone beyond all bounds in any thing.
Nain, own. *My nain*, mine own; obviously a corruption of *mine ain*, by attaching the *n* of mine to the word *ain*, and converting *mine* into *my*.
Naither, neither.
Naitherans, or *naithers*, used as neither, *e. g.* I dinna like it; *naitherans*, I do not like it neither.
Nane, none.
Nap of the knee. See *Knap*.
Nappie, diminutive of *Nap*, a short sleep; a wooden dish.
Nappy, ale; to be tipsy.
Nappy-boin, a small tub.
Nar, near; almost; close to.
Natch, to lay hold of violently.
Neebor, or *neibour*, a neighbour.
Needna, need not.
Neer-do-weel, one incorrigible in wickedness, folly, or indolence.
Neese, the nose; to sneeze.
Neet, a nit; the egg of a louse.
Neffu', *nievefu'*, a handful.
Negleck, a neglect; to neglect.
Negleckit, neglected; *neglectfu'*, apt to neglect.
Neth, below, or under.
Neuk, a nook, a corner.
Nevel, a blow with the fist or elbow.
Nevo, a nephew.
New-ca'd kye, newly driven kine.
Newlins, very lately.
Newrsday, New Year's day.
Newrgift, a present on a New Year's day.
Nibbit, two pieces of oaten cake spread with butter and laid face to face.
Nicher, a laugh, a neigh; to laugh, to neigh.
Nicht, night.
Nick, a name for the devil; to bite, to cheat, to cut.
Nicker, a favourite marble, to play with in the game of marbles.
Nicket, cheated.
Nicknack, a gimcrack.
Nickstick, a tally.
Niest, next.
Nieve, *nief*, the fist.
Nieve (hand for), hand and glove, cheek by jowl.
Nieve (to fauld the), to clench the fist.
Niffer, an exchange; to exchange, to barter.
Nifferer, a barterer.
Niff naff, to trifle; *niff-naffs*, trifles.
Nigger, or *neegre*, a negro, a churl, a miser.
Nines, perfection; *please me to the nines*, please me to perfection.
Nine-tailed-cat, a hangman's whip.
Nips, bits, small pieces.
Nippet, scanty, niggardly.
Nirl, to break into small pieces.
Nirl'd, stunted in growth.
Nirles, an eruption like the measles.
Nit, a nut.
Nither, *nidder*, to straiten for room; to subject to hunger; to pinch with cold; to shrivel.
No, not.
Nob, a knob.
Nocht, nought.
Nock, a notch; the nick of an arrow or spindle.
Nock, a clock. See *Knock*.
Noit. See *Knoit*.
Noof, to chat familiarly. See *Knoof*.
Nool-knee'd, knock-knee'd.
Noot, the ball which is struck at in playing at shinty.
Norlan, of or belonging to the North.
Northart, north, northward.
Notic't, noticed.
Notour, notorious.
Nourice, a nurse.
Nouriskap, the place of a nurse.
Nowte, black cattle.
Nowther, neither, not one nor other.
Nowte-herd, a keeper of black cattle.
Nubblock. See *Knubblock*.
Nuckle, or *newcal*, new-calved.
Nurling, *nurr*. See *Knurl*.
Nurlock, a small hard swelling, an induration on the skin.

O

OAM, the steam of boiling water.
Observe, an observation.
Ocht, aught, any thing.
Ochtlins, in the least.
Oe, or *oye*, a grandchild.
O'ergang, overbearingness, to treat with indignity, literally to tread.
O'erlay, an upper cravat.
O'erword, or *owrword*, a word used more frequently than any other, is called his *o'erword*.
Off-set, or *aff-set*, ornament, any thing that tends to recommend.
O haith! O faith! an oath.
Ohon! alas!
Olicht, nimble.
On-fa', or *on-come*, a fall of rain, hail, or snow.
On-going, conduct, behaviour.
Ony, or *onie*, any.
Ooly, or *ulzie*, oil.
Oon, *une*, an oven.
Ora, or *orro*, supernumerary, that can be spared.
Ora-duddies, superfluous rags, old clothes.
Orlage, the dial plate of a clock.
Orp, to weep sobbingly, or to continue it as if obstinately.
Ou, wool. See *Wou*.
Oughtlins, in the same degree.
Ouk, a week; *oukly*, weekly.
Oup, *oop*, to join two things together, or to strengthen them by warping something round the break or joining.
Ourie, shivering, drooping.
Ouriness, sadness, melancholy.
Oursel, or *ourscls*, ourselves.
Out, not in friendship.
Out-by, without, in the open air.
Out-gaet, way of getting out.
Out-gie, or *out-lay*, expenditure.
Out-laik, overweight, over measure.
Outlers, cattle not housed.
Out-owre, over, across, beyond.
Out-redd, completely put in order; to put completely in order.
Out-shot, a projection.
Out-stricking, an eruption on the skin.
Out-throu, completely through.
Out-wale, the refuse; sometimes also the pick or choice.
Owr, or *owre*, over, too much.
Owrcome, the issue, the surplus; to overcome.
Owre-hip, striking with a fore-hammer, by bringing it with a swing over the hip.
Owrelay, a cravat.
Owrgang, to overrun, to overcome.
Owrhaul, to overhaul.
Owrhead, wholly, without distinction.
Owrloup, to overleap.
Owrset, tired out, overset; to overset.
Owrsman, an oversman, an arbiter.
Owrtack, to overtake.
Owsen, oxen.
Owther, either.

Owthor, author.
Oxter, the arm-pit.
Oxtered, carried or supported under the arm.

P

PACE, Easter.
Pace-eggs, dyed eggs given at Easter as toys to children.
Pack, intimate, familiar; twelve stone of wool.
Paddack, or *puddock*, a frog.
Paddock-hair, the first down upon nestlings.
Paddock-ride, or *rude*, the spawn of frogs.
Paddock-stool, a fungous production like a mushroom.
Paidle, *paidlen*, to walk with difficulty as if in water.
Paik, to belabour one soundly.
Paiks, chastisement, a drubbing.
Pailing, a fence of wooden stakes.
Painch, paunch; *painches*, tripe.
Paip, the Pope, thistle down, a cherry stone.
Pairle, two rounds of the stocking in knitting.
Paise, a weight used by a weaver to keep his web stretched.
Paitrick, a partridge.
Pale, or *pail*, an instrument in trying the quality of cheese.
Pall-all (called also *the Beds*), a game among children.
Pang, to fill to cramming.
Pantry, a press, a larder.
Pap, to enter any where suddenly or unexpectedly.
Papin, a beverage of small beer and whisky.
Papingo, or *papinjay*, a mark shot at with the bow and arrow.
Papple, to bubble up like water; the corn-cockle.
Parishen, parish.
Parritch, oatmeal pudding, a well-known Scotch dish.
Partan, a crab fish.
Pash, the head.
Pat, did put; a pot.
Pate, Peter.
Pates, the steps at the corner of some roofs, for the easier climbing to the top.
Patient of death, a throe preceding dissolution.
Patron, a pattern.
Pattie, a little pot.
Pattle, or *pettle*, a small spade to clean the plough.
Paughty, proud, haughty, saucy.
Pauky, or *pawkie*, sly, cunning.
Paumie, a whip on the palm of the hand with the ferula.
Pawn, a short frilled lappet hung at the top or bottom of a bed, of the same cloth as the hangings.
Pay't, paid; beat.
Peat-reek, the smoke of burning turf, a bitter exhalation; whisky.
Pech, or *pegh*, to pant, to breathe short.
Pechan, *peghan*, the crop, the stomach.
Pechin, respiring with difficulty.
Pee, to urine.
Peelin, peeling, the rind of fruit.
Peen, or *pene*, a pane of glass.
Peep, a chirp; to chirp.
Peerie, a boy's peg top; to purl.
Peeseweep, a lapwing.
Peel-mow, a peat-stack, a heap of peat dust.
Peg, a blow.
Peinge, to whine; *peingein*, whining.
Pellock, a porpoise.
Peltry, trash, things of no value.
Pen, an arch.
Pennie, riches.
Penny-dog, a dog who constantly follows one. Applied to a mean sneaking person.
Penny-fee, small money wages.
Penny-pig, or *peinor-pig*, a small vessel of a round shape, used by children for keeping their money.
Penny-stane, a stone used as a quoit, also the game itself.
Penny-wedding, a wedding at which the guests contribute to the entertainment.
Penny-wheep, small beer, sometimes used to express whisky, when sold at a penny per gill.
Penny-widdie, a haddock dried without being split.
Pensfu', proud, conceited.
Perfite, perfect, accomplished.
Perjinkety, or *perjink*, precise, finical.
Perlie, *pirlie*, or *pirliewinkie*, the little finger.
Pernickety, finical, precise in trifles.
Perquire, or *perqueer*, accurate.
Perrackit, a little smart child.
Pettle, to feed daintily; to fondle. See *Pattle*.
Pettles, the feet.
Pewther, or *pouther*, pewter.
Phraise, to flatter, to speak fair.
Phraisin, flattering.
Pick, the choice; meat, food; pitch.
Pick-mirk, *pitmirk*, total darkness.
Pickle, a small quantity.
Piddle, to urine.
Pie-hole, an eyelet hole.
Piel, a match, an equal; to match, to equal.
Pig, an earthen pitcher.
Pig-wife, a woman who deals in crockery.
Pigmy-scraper, a little fiddler, a term of contempt for a bad player.
Pike, to pick, to scratch with the nail of the finger.
Pile, a grain, a pickle.
Pillowber, a pillow case.
Pimpin, mean, low.
Pine, pain, uneasiness, grief.
Pingle, trouble; to strive, to contend.
Pink, the most choice one; to glimmer.
Pinkie, glimmering; a pink; the little finger.
Pin-to, a pin used by a weaver for turning round the beam which receives the cloth.
Pints, ties to fasten the shoes.
Pint-stoup, a two-quart measure.
Piper's-news, a story which is no secret.
Pipes (*to tune one's*), to cry.
Pirn (*to wind one a*), is to do him an evil action, to take revenge on him.
Pirnie-cloth, where the web is of unequal threads, coarse and fine.
Pish, to piss.
Pit, to put.
Pizzant-like, poisoned-like, shrivelled, wasted, withered, applied to a human being.
Plack, two bodles, or the one-third of a penny English.
Plackless, pennyless, without money.
Plaid, a worsted mantle.
Plaidie, diminutive of plaid.
Plainstanes, the pavement.
Platie, diminutive of plate.
Play, to boil as a pot.
Playfairs, *playocks*, children's toys.
Plenishin, furniture for a house.
Plenchgate, or *plowgate*, as much land as can be tilled by one plough.
Plew, or *plewgh*, a plough; to till with a plough.
Plish, *plash*, to make a noise by dashing water.
Pliskie, a mischievous trick.
Plover, plover.
Plouster, to splash among water or mire.
Plot, to scald with hot water.
Plouk, a pimple.
Ploukie, or *ploukit*, pimpled.
Ploum, a plum.
Ploumdamis, a prune.
Plounge, a plunge; to plunge any thing into water.
Plowt, to jump, plunge into water; a heavy shower.
Ploy, an entertainment for children, a merry-making among young people, a procession.
Pluff, a puff, a small ignition of powder.
Pluffy, having a fat chubby face.
Plump, a heavy fall of rain; *thunder-plump*, a thunder shower; to rain heavily.
Plumrose, primrose.
Ply, a fold, a plait; to fold, to plait.
Poacher-court, kirk-session.
Pob, the refuse of flax from the mill.
Pock, a bag, a small sack.
Pock-shakings, the youngest of a family.
Podlie, a small fish.
Poind, or *poon*, to seize cattle or goods for rent.
Policy, pleasure or planting ground, the inclosure of a gentleman's mansion.
Portage, the goods allowed to be put on board a vessel as a passenger's private store or luggage.
Poortith, poverty.
Port-youl (*to sing*), *youl*, to cry.
Pose, a hoard.
Posie, a nosegay, a garland.
Pou, or *pu'd*, to pull, pulled.
Pouk, to pluck, to pull, to tug at.
Poukit-like, contemptible in appearance, withered-looking, having the expression of poverty, with shabbiness of apparel, puny.
Pourie, a cream pot.
Pourin, a small quantity of liquid.
Pousse, to push.
Poussie, a cat or hare.
Pow't, did pull.
Pout, a pullet, a chick. *He durst not play pout*, he durst not make the least noise or exertion.
Pouther, *powther*, powder; to powder; *pouthery*, like powder; fiery, active.
Pow, the head.
Powhead, a tadpole.
Pownie, a little horse.
Powsowdie, sheep-head broth.
Powt, a slight blow, a poker; to poke, to stir a fire.
Powter, to stir, to dig or scrape as among earth or ashes.
Pratfu', or *pretfu'*, tricky, mischievous, applied to children.
Pratick, practice, art.
Pratts, or *protts*, tricks, rogueries.
Preclair, supereminent, angelically fair.

Pree, or *prie*, a tasting; to taste.
Preen, a pin.
Preeve, or *prieve*, to prove; to taste.
Preevin, or *prievin*, a proving; a tasting.
Prent, print; to print.
Prick, to stick, to set.
Prickit, stuck, set.
Prickmedaintie, a finical person.
Pridefu', full of pride.
Prief, proof.
Prig, to haggle for a reduction of price in buying; *priggin*, the act of haggling.
Primsie, precise, demure.
Prinkle, to feel that pricking or tingling sensation which arises from a stoppage of the circulation of the blood.
Prize up, to force up as if by a lever.
Propine, a gift, or the promise of it; to declare.
Prowan, provender.
Pryme, to fill, to stuff, to prime.
Puddin, a pudding,
Pullishee, a pulley.
Pultrous, lecherous.
Pump, to break wind backwards with noise.
Pund, a pound, in value one shilling and eight pence sterling.
Puff'd, breathing short and with difficulty, in consequence of a full habit or violent exertion.
Purpie, purple.
Put, to push. *To put a stane*, to throw a stone forward from the hand raised over head.
Putten, pushed.
Pyat, or *pyet*, a magpie.
Pyle (*a pyle o' caff*), a single grain of chaff.
Pystle, epistle.

Q

QUAIKIN-ASH, or *Quaukin-aish*, the aspen.
Quair, a quire of paper.
Quairny, in small particles.
Quaite, quiet; *quaitely*, quietly.
Quak, quack, the cry of a duck.
Quarrel, a stone quarry.
Quat, to quit, to relinquish.
Quauk, to quake.
Quech, or *quegh*, a drinking cup with two handles, generally used for ale or beer.
Queen, equally even, exactly joined.
Queir, a choir in a church.
Quey, a cow from one to two years old.
Queyet, quiet, rest, tranquillity.
Queyne, or *quean*, a young woman.
Quietlenswise, in a quiet manner.

R

RACK, a frame for holding plate; wreck, ruin.
Rackle-handit, or *raucle-handit*, rash, ready to strike.
Rackless, careless, reckless.
Raff, plenty, abundance.
Raffan, hearty, merry.
Ragg, to rally.
Raggle, to ruffle.
Ragweed, ragwort.
Raible, a rhapsody of nonsense; to rattle nonsense.
Raik, or *rake*, a walk, a stroll; to stroll, to walk. *A raik of water*, as much as is brought from the well at one time.
Raikin, unsettled, greedy.
Raip, or *rape*, a rope.
Rair, a roar; to roar.
Raird, a loud sound; the breaking of wind backwards; a scold; to brag; to bandy ill language; to roar; to break wind backwards.
Raive, to rave.
Raivel, or *raivle*, a railing; to ravel, to protect or surround by railing.
Raivell'd, ravelled, disarranged, intricate.
Raize, to madden, to inflame.
Rame, a reiteration of words.
Ramfeezl'd, disordered with fatigue.
Ramgunshoch, rugged.
Ramp, a romp; to romp, to stamp about in fury.
Rampage, to rage, to storm.
Rampin', raging.
Rampron-Eel, the lamprey.
Ramstam, thoughtless, forward.
Random-splore, frolic.
Randy, *randie*, a scolding sturdy beggar, a shrew.
Rane, a rote, tedious jargon; to repeat over and over.
Rang, did reign. See *Ring*.
Ranter, to sew a seam across neatly, a roving fellow.
Rantin, joyous.
Rantletree, a wooden beam fixed in the chimney of country houses for suspending any thing over the fire.
Raploch, coarse; coarse woollen cloth.
Rapper, wrapper leather.
Rapple-up, to do work in a hurried and imperfect manner.
Rash, a rush; to rush, to thrust; *rash-buss*, a bush of rushes.
Rashen, made of rushes.
Rashes, rushes. See *Thrashes*.
Rashy, rushy, covered.
Rattle, a blow.
Ratton, a rat.
Rauchan, a plaid, a mantle.
Raucle, rash, stout, fearless, reckless.
Raught, reached.
Rauk, *rouk*, or *roaky*, fog, foggy, misty.
Rave, tore.
Raw, a row; cold and damp, applied to the weather.
Rax, to stretch; *rax't*, stretched.
Raxes, iron hooks, in which a spit turns.
Ream, cream, froth; to cream, to froth.
Reamin, creaming, brimful, frothing.
Reave, to rove.
Rebute, to repulse; rebuke.
Rede, *redd*, counsel; to counsel, to discourse; to put in order; to comb, to disentangle, to unfold, to separate, to clear up; counselled, cautioned, advised.
Red-peats, burning turfs.
Red-wat-shod, walking in blood over the shoe-tops.
Red-wud, stark mad.
Ree, half drunk, tipsy; *a ree yaud*, a wild horse.
Reek, smoke; to smoke; to soil with smoke; a quarrel.
Reekie, name given to Edinburgh.
Reekin, smoking.
Reekit, smoked; smoky, steamed.
Reel, a species of dance once peculiar to Scotland; to go through the figure of the reel.
Reel-rall, confusion; confused.
Reep, to rip.
Reest, or *roost*, to stand restive; to dry in the sun or smoke, applied to smoke.
Reestit, stood restive; stunted, withered; sun dried.
Reif, the itch; rapine.
Reifart, a raddish.
Reif-saw, itch ointment.
Reify, having the itch.
Reiff, or *rief randies*, sturdy beggars.
Reik, reach; to reach, to stretch out the hand.
Reik, or *rink*, the course of the stone in curling.
Reik-out, to rig out.
Reinge, to rinse; to rap hard.
Reingein, hard rapping.
Reissle, or *reessle*, a blow, a crashing fall; to beat soundly, to fall with a crash.
Remead, remedy.
Restrick, to restrict; *restrickit*, restricted.
Retour, a return.
Reuth, pity.
Reve, to rob, to steal.
Rever, a robber.
Rew, repentance, a change of mind; to repent.
Rewth, cause for repentance.
Rice, brushwood.
Richt, right, title; in health; to put in order, to right.
Rickle. See *Ruckle*.
Ride, *rude*, the spawn of frogs.
Rife, or *ryfe*, plenty.
Rift, a belch; to belch.
Rig, a ridge; a frolic, a riot.
Rig-an-fur, ribbing on stockings.
Rigbane, the backbone.
Riggin, the back, the ridge of a house.
Riggin, a ridgling; a creature with one testicle.
Rigwiddie, or *rigwiddie*, the rope or chain that crosses the saddle of a horse to support the spokes of a cart; spare, withered; one that deserves the gallows.
Rin, a run; to run, to melt; *rinnin'*, running.
Ring, reign; to reign; to wring.
Ringle-e'ed, where there is too much white in the eye.
Rink, the course of the stone in curling on ice.
Rip, a handful of unthreshed corn.
Ripe, *rype*, to search, to poke.
Ripples, pains in the back and loins; sounds which usher in death.
Ripplin-kame, a flax comb.
Risk, to rasp; to make a noise like the tearing of roots.
Riskit, *risket*, made a noise, as above.
Risp, a rasp; to rasp, to grind the teeth.
Rizzar, to dry in the sun; *rizzart*, dried in the sun.
Rizzars, *rizzarts*, red currants.
Roak, mist; *roaky*, foggy (west country). See *Rauk*, *Roaky*.
Rock, or *roke*, a distaff.
Rockin, a denomination for a friendly visit. In former times young women met with their distaffs, during the winter evenings, to spin and be merry—these were called *rockings*.
Roddikin, the fourth stomach of a ruminating animal.
Roklay, a mantle.
Rone, the spout which carries the water down from the roof of a house; a sheep's skin dressed.
Rood, stands likewise for the plural, *roods*.
Room, a shred, a border or selvage.
Roose, or *ruse*, to flatter, to commend, encourage.
Roos'd, *roused*, praised.
Roove, a rivet; to rivet.

Rottan, a rat.
Roufu', rueful, sorrowful.
Rouk, a rook, a rapacious person; to bereave of every thing, to plunder.
Roukery, a plundering.
Roun', round, in the circle of neighbourhood.
Round, to whisper; *rounder*, a whisperer.
Roup, hoarseness; to rook, to win every thing from a person.
Roupie, or *roupit*, hoarse as with cold.
Roust, rust; to rust; *roustit*, rusted; *rousty*, rusty.
Rout, *rowt*, a multitude; to roar, to low as cattle. See *Rowt*.
Routhie, plentiful; *routhrie*, plenty.
Rove, to rave, to be in a delirium.
Rovin, raving, delirium.
Row, to roll, to wrap; *rowin*, rolling, winding, wrapping up.
Rowans, the fruit of the mountain ash.
Rowan-tree, the mountain ash.
Rown, the roe of a fish.
Rowp, to sell by auction; *rowpin*, an auction, a sale.
Rowpwife, a female auctioneer.
Rowt, a severe blow.
Royd, forward, disorderly.
Roydness, forwardness, wildness.
Rozet, rosin; *rozety*, having rosin upon it, resembling rosin.
Rub, to rob; *rubber*, a robber; *rubbery*, a robbery.
Ruck, a rick.
Ruckle, a quantity of loose materials thrown together—as a *ruckle* of stones. When a person is much wasted in body, he is said to be nothing but a *ruckle* of bones.
Rudas, an old, wrinkled, ill-natured woman.
Rude, the red taint of the complexion; the spawn of frogs.
Ruff, roll of a drum; to roll on a drum.
Rug, a good bargain; to pull, to tug, to tear.
Rugh, rough.
Rugh-rider, a horse-breaker.
Rullions, coarse shoes.
Rummle, to stir about, to rumble.
Rummlegairy, disorderly.
Rummlegumption, *rumble-gumption*, rough common sense.
Rumple, the rump, the tail.
Run-deils, downright devils.
Rung, a cudgel.
Runkle, a wrinkle, a crease; to wrinkle, to crease.
Runsh, to crunch.
Runt, the stem of colewort or cabbage; an opprobrious epithet to a woman.
Ruser, a boaster.
Rushie, a riot.
Ruth, sorrow.
Ruther, a rudder.
Ryce, brushwood.
Ryke, to reach.
Rype, to search a pocket, to stir a fire, &c.

S

SAB, to sob; *sabbit*, sobbed.
Sabbin, *sobbin*, sobbing.
Sad, *sadden*, to grow solid, to consolidate.
Sae, so.
Saebins, since it is so; provided that.
Saem, *swine's saem*, hog's tallow.
Saft, soft; *saftly*, softly.
Saikless, innocent.
Sain, *saint*, to bless, to consecrate.
Saip, soap; *saipman*, soap-maker.
Sair, a sore; to serve; *sair't*, served; *sairly*, sorely; *sair head*, a headache.
Sairin, as much as satisfies one; an alms.
Sairy, *sairie*, poor, silly, used as a term of kindness or pity.
Sal, *sall*, shall.
Sandel, a smelt or sparling.
Sang, a song; *by my sang*, a petty oath.
Saps, sops.
Sark, a shirt, a shift; *sarkin*, coarse linen shirting; *sarkit*, provided with shirts.
Sauf, safe; to save; except.
Saugh, the willow; *saughen*, of willow; *saugh woodies*, withes made of willows.
Saugher, to walk and act in a lifeless, inactive manner; *saughrin*, inactive, lifeless.
Saul, soul; *saulless*, spiritless, dastardly.
Sault, costly, expensive, of serious consequence.
Saumont, salmon.
Saun, sand; *saun-blin*, purblind, short-sighted.
Saunt, *sauntit*, a saint; to vanish.
Saur, a smell, a savour; to smell, to savour.
Saut, salt; to salt; *sautfit*, a salt holder; *sautit*, salted; *saut-backets*, salt boxes.
Saw, salve, plaister; to sow.
Sax, six; *saxpence*, a sixpence; *saxt*, the sixth.
Scail, *skail*, to depart, to scatter, to spill, to dismiss; *scailwin'*, a sudden occurrence, which occasions a dispersion.
Scaith, harm, to harm; *scaithless*, harmless.
Scance, a hasty survey in the mind, a glance; to shine, to taunt or reproach.
Scantlins, scarcely.
Scart, a scratch; a niggard; to scratch; *scart-free*, without injury or expense.
Scaud, a scald; to scald; the appearance of light; *scaud o' day*, the day-break.
Scauld, a scold, a termagant; to scold.
Scaum, a burn; to singe.
Scaur, a scare; to scare; a precipitous bank of earth which the stream has washed red.
Scaw'd, scabbed.
Scawl, a scold.
Scawp, the scalp, a bare piece of dry stony ground.
Sclatch, a bespattering with mire, &c.
Sclate, a slate.
Sclate-pen, a slate-pen.
Sclater, a slater; a small insect of the beetle species.
Sclent, a slant, an obliquity, a squint; to slant, to squint.
Scob, to cut in the manner a cheese is proved before sale; to take long stitches in sewing; to dip the shuttle in weaving, so as the woof appears above the warp. The cloth is then said to be *scobbed*.
Scobs, onions, which having begun to vegetate, are then planted.
Scodgie, a female drudge about a kitchen.
Scog, to shelter, to shun.
Scomfish, or *scomfisht*, to be sickened by bad air or heavy meat. It implies the sensation of loathing with a degree of suffocation.
Scone, a kind of bread.
Sconner, *scunner*, a loathing; to loathe.
Scool, *skool*, a shoal of fish.
Score, a scratch; to scratch, to furrow as with the point of a nail.
Scorn, to jeer one about a sweetheart. Two young people talked of as intending to marry, are said to be *scorned* with each other.
Scot, an assessment.
Scour, a hearty drink; to run or walk quickly.
Scour-aff, to drink off heartily and quickly.
Scout, a syringe; to eject any liquid forcibly.
Scowp, scope, plenty of room; to skip.
Scowry, tattered, shabby in appearance; showery and windy.
Scowther, a hasty toasting, so as to burn; to burn slightly.
Scraigh, *scraich*, or *screigh*, to scream as a hen, partridge, &c.
Scrat, a small fish, a disparaging term to a puny little child.
Screed. See *Skreed*.
Scrieve, a piece of writing; to move in furious career.
Scrimmish, or *scrimmage*, a skirmish.
Scrimp, to scant; *scrimpet*, did scant, scanty.
Scrimply, scarcely.
Scroggy, *scroggie*, thorny, briary; *scroggs*, thorns, briars.
Scrufe, scurf.
Scruiby, the scurvy; *scruibily*, scurvily.
Scruiby-gurse, scurvy grass.
Scud, foam or froth; to raise froth or foam upon.
Scud-aff, to drink any thing quickly.
Scuds, a chastisement, a beating; to beat, to whip.
Scuff, a shove with the foot in walking, a slight touch or graze in passing an object, or in being passed by it; to shove or scrape with the shoe in walking; to tarnish by wearing; to treat a subject superficially.
Scuffy, shabby.
Scug, a shelter; to give shelter to, to avoid, to shun; to take advantage of a shelter, to conceal one's self, to crouch or turn aside in order to avoid a blow.
Scuilduddery, *scuilduddrie*, fornication, obscene talk.
Scull, a basket.
Scum, a worthless person; to skim.
Scutch, a beating, a dusting; to whip, to beat, to dust as in beating clothes before brushing.
See'd, did see.
Seeds, the husks of oatmeal.
Seek, to ooze, to leak.
Seelfu, pleasant.
Seenle, seldom.
Seep, to leak, to ooze.
Seg, to set the teeth on edge.
Segg, or *seggan*, the blue and yellow water flower-de-luce.
Seizin', seizing.
Sel', self; *a body's sel*, one's self alone.
Sel't, sold.
Semple, the commonalty; in common life.
Sen', to send.
Serran', servant.
Sess, an assessment.
Set, disposed, inclined; to let in hire, to become, to fit; *set-aff*, to go away, to put away; *set-out*, to set out by ornament or contrast; to embellish.
Settin, becoming, suitable.
Settlin, a settling; *to get a settlin*, to be frightened into quietness.
Settrell, thickset.
Shachl't, distorted, shapeless.

Shairn, cows' dung; *shairny*, befouled with cow's dung.
Shake-doun, a temporary bed made on the floor.
Shangie, or *shangan*, a cloven stick fastened to the tail of a dog.
Shank, the shaft of a coal pit; to walk, to run; *shankit*, walk it; *shanks*, legs.
Shanks-naigie (*to ride on*), to walk on foot.
Shanna, shall not.
Shargie, shrivelled, thin; *sharginess*, thinness.
Shaughle, *shauchle*, to shove in walking; to walk lamely, inactively, sillily, or as if the shoes were too large for the feet.
Shaughle-bane, or *shuckle-bane*, the bone of the wrist.
Shaul, or *shawl*, shallow.
Shave, a slice, as of bread.
Shaver, a humorous wag; a barber.
Shavie, an ill turn.
Shaw, to show; a small wood in a hollow; *shawn*, shown.
Shawp, to shell; *shawps*, husks.
Shawpit, shelled, deprived of the husk.
Shaws, the branches of potatoes, leaves of turnips, &c.
Shear, to divide, to part, to reap.
Shearer, a reaper.
Shearin', the act of reaping.
Shed, to divide, to separate.
Sheep-shank. To think one's self nae sheep-shank, to be conceited.
Sheilin', a hut.
Sheilin-seeds, the husks of grain.
Sheilins, grain which has been freed from the husks.
Sheltie, or *shaltie*, a small horse.
Sherra-Muir, Sheriff-Moor, the famous battle that was fought in the rebellion, 1715.
Sheugh, a ditch, a trench, a sluice.
Shiel, a shed; *sheating*, a shepherd's cottage.
Shill, shrill, chill.
Shilpie, a pale, sickly, shrivelled person.
Shilpit-milk, milk beginning to turn acid.
Shinty, a sort of game of Golf; only that in this game it is the object of one party to strike the ball the one way, and that of the opposite party the contrary—Scots Racket.
Shire, to pour off liquor from the dregs; clear, thin, applied to liquids.
Shirey, conceited, proud.
Shit, a term of contempt to a puny little child.
Shog, a shove, a shock; to shake backward and forward, to jog.
Shog-bog, a bog, a quagmire or marsh, where the roots of grass on its surface are so interwoven as to permit the sward to be walked on without sinking.
Shoggle, to joggle.
Shoggly, insecure in footing, that may be moved from side to side.
Shool, a shovel, a shove; to shovel.
Shoon, shoes; soon.
Shoot, a push; to push.
Shoot-by, to put off, to defer.
Shore, to offer, to threaten.
Shot, a stroke in play, a move in chess or draughts; shooting into seed.
Shottle, or *shuttle*, a small drawer.
Shou, to frighten away by noise or gesture.
Shouther, the shoulder; to jostle with the shoulder.
Shrew, to curse.
Shuggy-shou. See *Shou*.
Shure, sure, certain, steady, surely; did shear, shore.
Sib, a-kin, related; *sibness*, relationship.
Sic, or *sick*, such.
Sicht, sight; to inspect narrowly.
Sichtly, personable.
Sicken, such.
Sicker, sure, severe, parsimonious, griping.
Sickerly, severely, parsimoniously.
Sic-like, of the same kind.
Sic-wise, in such a manner.
Sidelins, sideways.
Sike, a sink, a drain, a small run of water.
Siller, silver, money.
Siller weed, silver mug.
Simmer, summer.
Sin, the sun; a son.
Sin', since.
Sinacle, the smallest quantity.
Sing, to singe; *sing't*, singed.
Sinsyne, since that time.
Sirken't, lifeless, inactive, afraid of pain.
Sirple, to drink sippingly.
Sit on, when any food is preparing by boiling, and is left unstirred, so as to adhere to the bottom of the pot, it is said to *sit on*.
Sitherwood, southern-wood.
Sithes, or *sythes*, chives.
Sive, to drain, to searce; *siver*, a drain, a sewer.
Skaif, a shabby person, a worthless fellow.
Skail. See *Scail*.
Skair, a share; to share.
Skate, a little-worth boy or girl.
Skeelie, slate pen.
Skeenie, or *Skeengie*, small twine.
Skeigh, *skeich*, skittish, spirited, proud.
Skellum, a worthless fellow.
Skelly, to squint, to look awry.
Skelp, to strike, to slap; to walk with a smart tripping step; a smart blow.
Skelpie-limmer, a technical term in female scolding.
Skelpin, *skelpit*, striking; walking rapidly, literally striking the ground.
Skelve, to separate into laminæ; a thin slice.
Skep, to escape.
Skep-in, to get into acquaintance, to lie together, to become familiar.
Skepp, a bee-hive.
Skiff, a shove or scrape with the foot in walking; to go with a light easy shoving step; to make a flat stone skip along the surface of the water.
Skift, a flying shower.
Skillet, a small bell.
Skilly, skilful.
Skink, a kind of broth; to fill liquor frequently out of one vessel into another, as if to mix.
Skinkle, to shine, to sparkle, to glitter.
Skinklin, *skinkin*, thin, gauzy; a small portion.
Skirl, a shriek, a cry; to shriek, to cry as a child.
Skirlin, shrieking, crying.
Skirl't, shrieked.
Skit, a contemptuous designation for a female.
Sklent, slant, a wry look; to run aslant; to deviate from truth.
Sklented, ran, or hit in an oblique direction.
Sklice, a slice; to slice.
Skouth, vent, free action.
Skrae, a thin meagre creature.
Skranky, slender.
Skreed, a lie; a piece torn off; the noise made in rending; a large piece; a tedious oration; a rent; to lie; to rend.
Skreed-aff, to perform any thing quickly—generally applied to reading or writing.
Skreigh, a scream; to scream—the first cry uttered by a child.
Skreigh-o'-day, the day-break.
Skreinge, to run forcibly; to rinse, to whip, to beat.
Skreingin, a beating, a whipping.
Skrimmish, a skirmish; to skirmish.
Skurrivaig, a vagabond; to wander about idly.
Skwype, a tear, a rend; to rend.
Skyre, to glance, to shine.
Skyrin, shining; making a great show.
Skytch, to skate.
Skyte, a smart stroke as with the back of the hand on the face; to glide swiftly, to shoot; to fly off or against any thing with a spring; to squirt the spittle forcibly through the teeth.
Slab, a lubberly fellow; *slabber*, a slovenly dirty fellow; to besmear, as a child does his clothes in taking soup.
Slade, did slide.
Slae, a sloe.
Slaid, a heavy, inactive, unwieldy person.
Slaik, a lick, a slabbering kiss; to lick, to kiss in a slabbering manner.
Slairy, to bedaub.
Slairy, a portion of the bedaubing matter.
Slaister, same as *slairy*.
Slap, a gap, a breach in a hedge or wall; *slaps*, slops.
Slash, a slabbering kiss; to kiss in a slabbering manner.
Slashy, wet and dirty.
Slaw, slow; *slawly*, slowly.
Slee, sly, cunning; *sleest*, sliest.
Sleekit, or *sleek*, smooth, designing, sly, cunning.
Slid, slippery, wheedling, smooth and cunning in manner and conversation; *sliddery*, slippery.
Slim-o'er, to do any thing with careless hurry, to finish superficially.
Slink, a sheep, calf, or kid, cast before the time, or taken from the *matrix* after the death of the mother.
Slip, a certain quantity of reeled yarn.
Slocken, *sloken*, to quench a fire; to slack thirst.
Slooter, or *slutter*, a lumpish inactive person.
Sloottery, or *sluttery*, slovenly.
Slott, a bolt; to bolt.
Slubber, to take soft food, to make a noise in drawing it into the mouth.
Slunk, a slough.
Slush, a puddle; *slushy*, miry.
Sluthhund, a bloodhound.
Slype, to fall over, as a wet furrow from the plough; *slypet*, fell.
Sma', small.
Smack, kiss.
Smaik, a mean scurvy fellow.
Smash, a blow, a stroke by a violent fall, the state of being dashed to pieces; to dash in pieces, to beat soundly.
Smatchert, a term of contempt to a child.
Smawly, small, little.
Smeary, to besmear.
Smeddum, dust, powder, mettle, sense, sagacity.
Smeek, smoke, a quarrel, high words; to smoke any thing; to dry by smoke; to emit smoke.

Smergh, marrow, energy, sense, virtue.
Smicker, to smile fawningly.
Smiddy, *smiddie*, a smithy, a smith's work shop.
Smirtle, to smile bashfully, or as if endeavouring to conceal it.
Smit, to infect; *smittie*, infectious.
Smoor, or *smore*, a smothering; to smother, to suffer smothering; *smoored*, smothered.
Smoukie, a little, cunning, fawning child.
Smourock, a kiss as if taken in a concealed manner.
Smouty, *smoutie*, smutty, obscene, ugly; *smouty phiz*, sooty aspect.
Smowt, a small fish; a trifling little boy or girl.
Smudge, to laugh in one's sleeve.
Smug, to kiss as if smuggling or concealing it.
Smurr, a thick small rain; to drizzle.
Smytry, *smytrie*, a numerous collection of small creatures.
Snab, a professional epithet used among shoemakers, and applied as a designation of one of the craft, as chip is among carpenters.
Snack, a snap, a slight repast; severe, sharp, ready-witted; to snap as a dog.
Snackly, sharply, smartly.
Snakin, exulting and sneering.
Snapper, a blunder, a stumble, an error; to stumble, to err in conduct.
Snaps, small round cakes of ginger bread.
Snap-up, to devour hastily; to take one short in speaking, to interrupt hastily in catching at an expression.
Snash, abusive language, a blow; to use testy and abusive language; to make a snap at.
Snashtry, trifles, extravagant unnecessary eatables.
Snashy, testy.
Snaw, snow; to snow.
Snaw-broo, snow water.
Snawy, *snawie*, snowy.
Sneck, a latch, the latch of a door; to put a door on the latch.
Sneck-drawer, *snick-drawer*, an artful designing person; *sneck-drawing*, addicted to over-reaching, cunning, designing.
Sned, to lop, to cut off.
Sned besoms, to cut brooms.
Sneddins, cuttings.
Sneer, a snort; to draw the breath strongly through the nose.
Sneeshin, snuff; *sneeshin-mill*, a snuff-box.
Sneg, an incision, a cutting off, a notch; to cut off, to snip.
Sneist, a sneering or testy taunt.
Sneist, or *sneyst*, to taunt in a testy manner; to jeer.
Snell, sharp, cold, ill-natured, bitter; *snelly*, sharply, coldly, ill-naturedly, bitterly; *snellest*, bitterest.
Snib, a bolt, a reproof, a preventive; to bolt, to catch, to cut off, to force, to abandon.
Snick-drawer. See *Sneck-drawer*.
Sniffle, to trifle; *snifflin*, trifling.
Snifter, a canine distemper, in which the creature is affected with a difficulty of breathing through the nose; to breathe through the nose with difficulty.
Snirt, or *snirtle*, concealed laughter; to breathe through the nostrils in a displeased manner.
Snod, neat, trim; to trim, to prune, to lop, to put in order.
Snoit, snot; to blow the nose hastily.
Snoke, a snuffing or smelling at; to snuff, to smell at.
Snood, a portion of a hair line for fishing; a ribbon for binding the head, and tying up the hair; to tie up the hair, or bind the head with a snood.
Snool, one whose spirit is broken with oppressive slavery; to submit tamely, to sneak.
Snoove, to go smoothly and constantly; to sneak.
Snoran, *snorin*, snoring.
Snowk, to scent or snuff as a dog, &c.; *snowkit*, scented, snuffed.
Soaky, or *socky*, a fat unwieldy person.
Soom, or *soum*, the air-bladder of a fish.
Sober, ailing, mean, insignificant, weak, poor; to depress, to keep under.
Sock, a ploughshare.
Sodds. See *Sunks*.
Sodger, a soldier.
Sonse, luck, prosperity; *sonsie*, having sweet engaging looks; lucky, jolly.
Soom, to swim.
Sooth, or *sowth*, truth.
Sorrow, an opprobrious term applied to a child.
Sorrow-raip, a rope laid over the shoulders for supporting the shafts of a hand-barrow.
Soss, flummery, any kind of stew or fricassee, a soft heavy fall; to fall as a heavy soft substance.
Sotter, to simmer.
Sough, a heavy sigh, a sound dying on the ear.
Souk, a suck; to suck; *soukies*, the flower of the clover.
Soukin, sucking.
Soun', sound; a sound; to sound.
Soup, a sweep; to sweep.
Souple, the lower part of the flail; supple; to supple.
Sour-milk, butter-milk.
Sourocks, the leaves of the sorrel.
Sour-ploums, a sulky person.
Souter, a shoe-maker.
Souther, to solder.
Sowens, or *sowns*, the fine flower remaining amongst the seeds of oatmeal made into a pudding.
Sowp, a spoonful.
Sowth, hum, whisper.
Spae, to tell fortunes; *spae-man*, a male fortune teller.
Spaik, spoke; did speak.
Spaiks, the wooden bars on which a coffin is carried to the place of interment.
Spail, or *spale*, a chip, a shaving of wood, a thin portion of grease which sometimes curls on a burning candle, and is considered ominous of death.
Spain, *spean*, to wean.
Spairan, *spairin*, spairing.
Spairge, a quantity of the bedaubing matter; to besprinkle, to dash water or mire, or any liquid, on any person or thing.
Spang, a span; to span.
Spangie, boss-and-span, a game among children.
Spark, a spot, as of ink or mire; to spot, to bespatter.
Sparlin', or *spirlin'*, the smelt.
Spat, a spot.
Spaul, or *spawl*, a limb.
Spaviet, having the spavin.
Speel, a climb; to climb.
Speer, *spier*, to ask a question; *speerin*, inquiring, asking.
Speet, to spit, thrust through.
Spelder, to tear open, to cut up and stretch asunder.
Speldins, or *speldrins*, dried haddocks.
Spence, the parlour of a farm house or cottage.
Spend, to spring.
Spice, pride, saucincss, conceitedness; a small quantity.
Spicy, proud, saucy, conceited.
Spill, to spoil, to destroy.
Spindle, a certain quantity of spun yarn.
Spink, a pink.
Spinnin-graith, wheel and roke and lint.
Splatter, a splutter; to splutter.
Spleuchan, a tobacco pouch, a purse of animal's skin.
Splinder, a splinter; to splinter.
Splinder-new, quite new.
Splore, noisy merriment, a frolic.
Spoolie, or *spoolzie*, spoil, plunder; to spoil, to plunder.
Sprackle, or *sprachle*, to clamber; *sprachled*, scrambled.
Spraings, tints, shades of colour.
Spraing't, shaded, streaked.
Sprattle, to scramble.
Spreckle, to speckle; *spreckled*, spotted, speckled.
Spree, an innocent frolic; fine, showy, trim.
Sprig, a small nail without a head.
Spring, a cheerful tune.
Sprit, *spret*, a tough-rooted plant, like rushes.
Sprit-new, quite new.
Sprittie, full of sprits.
Sproosle, an anxious bustle, a hurried exertion.
Sprose, a boast, a brag, a dashing frolic, an ostentatious appearance; *sproser*, a braggart.
Sprush, neat, tidy, fine, trim.
Sprush-up, to dress up, to make neat.
Spung, the breeches pocket, a watch fob, a purse; to pick one's pocket.
Spunk, fire, mettle, wit, spirit, spark, a brimstone match.
Spunkie, mettlesome, spirited; will-o'-wisp, or ignis fatuus.
Spunk-out, to come to light.
Spurt, a revival, a communication of energy, an incitement, a spur, an impulse.
Spurtle, a stick used in making oatmeal pudding or porridge; *spurtle-blade*, the sword.
Squatter, to dash through the water like a duck, skimming it, and fluttering with its wings.
Squattle, to sprawl, to make such an exertion as a duck does in shallow water.
Squeel, a scream, a screech; to scream.
Stab, a stake; to stake, to surround with stakes.
Stack, a rick; to put up in a rick.
Stack-yaird, the inclosure in which stacks are erected.
Staggie, the diminutive of stag.
Staig, a young horse.
Stainsh, staunch.
Stainsher, an iron stanchion or bar.
Stammer, to stagger.
Stammock, the stomach.
Stamp, a trap.
Stance, a station.

Stand, to cost.
Stane, a stone; made of stone.
Stane-cast, such a distance as a stone may be thrown.
Stane-chacker, the bird stone-chatter.
Stang, sting; did sting; also a long pole, used anciently in a particular manner for punishment. To ride the *stang* on any person, is to raise the pole, mentioned above, on the shoulders of two people, a third gets up on it, and publishes the crime of the offender.
Stank, a pool of stagnant water.
Stap, a step; a stop, a hindrance; a push, a thrust; to step, to hinder, to stop, to give over, to push.
Stappit, stepped, stopped, thrust, hindered.
Stapple, a stopple.
Staps (*to go to*), to turn quite infirm, to go into staves as a dry cask.
Stark, stout; arrant, very.
Starn, stern; the stern of a ship; a star; a single grain.
Staucher, or *stacher*, to reel, to stagger.
Stauf, a staff.
Staulk, a stalk; to stalk.
Staulkin, stalking, walking disdainfully without an aim.
Staummer, to stagger, to stammer in speech; *staumrel*, foolish, stammering in speech.
Staun, or *stan'*, a stand; to stand.
Staund, a barrel set on end.
Stave, to walk inconsiderately, to enter a place forwardly and thoughtlessly. *To go to staves*, to go to ruin.
Staw, a surfeit; to surfeit; *staw*, or *staw'd*, did steal.
Staw, or *sta'*, a stall for cattle.
Stead, an impression; as *Fitstead*, the print of the foot.
Steadin, a situation for building.
Stech, *steigh*, to cram the belly, &c., a confused mass.
Stechin, cramming; *stecht*, crammed.
Steek, a stitch of a needle; to stitch; to close, to shut; *steekit*, stitched, shut, closed.
Steer, a stir; to stir, to trouble, to touch, to meddle with.
Steeve, or *steive*, firm, fast; *steevely*, firmly.
Stell, a still; to distil.
Sten' or *stend*, to bolt, to spring suddenly and forcibly; to rear on end as a horse.
Stent, a task; a limit; an assessment; to stint, to limit, to assess, to stretch out. *To be on the stent*, to be on the stretch.
Stew, a vapour, a stench; to stench.
Stewys, rusty nails.
Stey, steep; *steyest*, steepest.
Stibble, stubble; *stibble-rig*, the reaper in harvest who takes the lead.
Stichle, to snore; *stichlin*, snoring.
Stick, a stoppage, an impediment; to botch, to bungle; to spoil in the execution.
Stick an' stow, totally, altogether.
Sticket, stopped, hindered.
Sticks (*go to*), to go to ruin.
Stiffening, starch made up for clear starching.
Stimpart, the fourth part of a peck, or the eighth part of a Winchester bushel.
Stinkan, foul smelling.
Stirk, a young cow or bull.
Stirling, the bird starling.
Stirrah, an appellation of reproach to a boy.
Stock, a plant or root of colewort, cabbage, &c.; to become benumbed. *Stock of a bed*, the fore part of a bed frame.
Stock-an-horn, a shepherd's pipe, formed of a reed stuck into a horn.
Stockin', a stocking. *Throwing the stockin'*—When the bride and bridegroom are put into bed, the former throws a stocking at random among the company, and the person whom it falls on is the next that will be married.
Stoit, to walk like one infirm.
Stoiter, a stagger, a reel; to stagger, to stammer.
Stook, *stouk*, a shock of corn; to put up into shocks; *stooked*, made into shocks.
Stoopie, a wooden water-pitcher.
Stoor, sounding hollow, hoarse, austere.
Storm-sted, or *storm-steddit*, stopped by a storm.
Stot, a young ox.
Stott, the act of rebounding; to strike a ball against any thing so as to make it rebound.
Stou, a shred, a slice; to crop, to cut a slice from.
Stouins, croppings of coleworts or cabbages.
Stound, sudden pang of the heart.
Stoup, a post, a support.
Stoup-an-roup, the whole of a thing.
Stour, or *stowre*, dry dust, also dust when in motion by the wind, &c.; a battle, a riot.
Stowrie, thick and short; a thick and short person, generally applied to a child.
Stowlins, *stownlins*, by stealth.
Stown, *stoun*, stolen.
Stowp, or *stoup*, a kind of jug with a handle, a spirit measure, a wooden water pitcher.
Stowth, stealth.
Stoyte, the walking of a drunken man.
Strack, did strike.
Strae, straw. *To die a fairstrae death*, to die in bed, not by violence.
Straik, a stroke, a blow; to stroke, to strike.
Straikin, coarse linen.
Straikins, the refuse of flax.
Straikit, stroked.
Straikit-measure, exact measure.
Stramash, a riot, a broil.
Stramullyuch, cross, sour, ill-natured.
Strand, the water-way on the sides of a street.
Strang, strong.
Strappin, tall and alert, bouncing, stately.
Strath, a plain by a river side, a valley.
Straught, straight, direct; the state of being straight; to straighten. *It's aff the straught*, it is off the straight line.
Stravaig, to wander as if without any object, to stroll idly.
Strave, did strive.
Streamers, the northern lights, or Aurora Borealis.
Streek, a stretch; to stretch a thing, to stretch one's self; *streekin*, stretching.
Streen (*the*), last night.
Strick, rapid as a river; a handful of flax.
Striddle, to straddle.
Stridelegs, astraddle; *stridelins*, astride.
String, to hang with a rope.
Strinkle, to sprinkle, to strew.
Stroan, to spout, to piss.
Stroot, or *strute*, intoxicated, stuffed full.
Stroup, the spout of any thing.
Strum, a fit of sulkiness; sulky.
Strunge, harsh, strong tasted.
Strunt, spirituous liquor; a fit of ill-humour or sulkiness; to walk sturdily, to strut. *To tak the strunt*, to become pettish or sulky.
Struve, did strive.
Studdy, *studdie*, an anvil.
Stuff, corn, or any grain unthreshed.
Stumle, a stumble; to stumble.
Stump, to halt.
Stumpie, stout, thick and short.
Stunkart, a stinking person.
Sturt, trouble.
Sturtin, frighted.
Styan, or *stye*, a small tubercle on the eyelid.
Styme, a little sight, a small knowledge of any thing.
Sucken, legally astricted, the jurisdiction of a mill.
Sucker, sugar; to sugar; a term of fondness; *suckert*, fondled.
Suddle, to soil, to sully.
Sugh. See *Sough*.
Sumph, a blockhead; *sumphish*, blockish, stupid, doltish.
Sunday's-claes, dress for going to church in.
Sune, soon.
Sung, singed.
Sunk, the back of the fire; a seat of turf.
Sunken, sullen, sour.
Sunks, a kind of pad used in place of a saddle.
Suthron, southern.
Swabble, to beat.
Swack, a hearty drink; a forcible throw; to drink deep or in haste; to throw with force.
Swage, to assuage.
Swaird, sward.
Swall, to swell; *swall'd*, swelled; *swallin*, a swelling.
Swally, to swallow.
Swamp, slender.
Swank, limber, tall and agile.
Swankie, or *swanker*, a tight strapping young fellow or girl.
Swap, an exchange; to exchange.
Swarf, or *swerf*, a swoon; to swoon.
Swarfed, swooned.
Swash, a dash, a blow; fuddled.
Swat, did sweat.
Swatch, a pattern, a sample.
Swatts, small beer.
Sweatin, sweating.
Swecht,, burden, weight, force.
Swee, the crane over a fire, from which any thing is suspended; to incline to one side, to move as on a crane; *swee-bauk*, a balance beam. *To be on the swee-bauks*, to be verging towards bankruptcy.
Sweel, to swath, to swaddle.
Sweer, or *sweert*, lazy, averse, unwilling, slow; *dead-sweer*, extremely averse.
Sweet-breeds, the diaphragm in animals.
Sweeties, confections.
Swelt, suffocated.
Swingein, large, big; a whipping, a beating.
Swinke, to labour hard.
Swirl, a curl, a circle, an eddy, a whirling motion; *swirlie*, knaggy, full of knots.
Swith, quickly, instantly, get away, make haste.
Swither, a doubt, the state of irresolution; to hesitate in forming an opinion or resolution.
Swoor, or *swure*, did swear.

Sybie, or *sybow*, a young onion.
Syude, to rinse, to clear wash.
Syne, after that, since, ago, then.

T

TACK, hold ; a lease.
Tackets, broad-headed nails for the heels of shoes.
Tackit, or *tongue-tackit*, a particular conformation of the tongue, where the frenum extends so far towards the point of it, as to impede the action of sucking.
Tackle, an arrow.
Tack-on, to buy on credit.
Tack-the-gate, to set off, to depart.
Tack-wi', or *tack-with*, to acknowledge ; to kindle.
Tae, the toe ; *three-tae'd*, having three prongs ; *the tae half*, the one half.
Tae-ee, a pet, a fondling.
Taen, one, contrasted with *tither*.
Tag, the tie of a shoe.
Taggit, when the upper garment, a gown or frock, is shorter than the petticoat under it, the woman is said to be *taggit*, *tag-tailed*, or *tig-tailed*.
Taid, a toad.
Taigle, to hinder, to delay.
Taikle, tackle.
Tailie, or *tylie*, a slice, a junt, as of beef.
Tairge, a target.
Taisle, a tassel.
Tait, or *tate*, a small quantity.
Taivers, tatters, as boiled to *taivers*, boiled to tatters.
Taivert, foolish, half-witted.
Tak, to take ; *takin*, taking.
Tale-pyet, a tell-tale.
Tallon, tallow ; to grease with tallow.
Tandle, a bonfire.
Tane-awa, a wasted infant.
Tangles, icicles.
Tangs, the tongs.
Tantrums, whimsies, high airs.
Tap, the top ; a child's spinning top.
Tap, or *tint-tap*, lint on the distaff.
Tap-castle, the upper part of a weaver's loom.
Tape, to use sparingly, to spare in the using.
Tapetless, thoughtless, headless.
Tappie-tousie, a game among children ; a bushy head of hair.
Tappit, having a top ; *tappit-hen*, a hen with a tuft of feathers on her head ; a quart measure, in allusion to the knob on the lid.
Tapsalteerie, topsy-turvy.
Targe them tightly, cross question them closely.
Targets, tatters.
Tarrow, a loathing ; to loathe, to turn from meat or drink with disgust.
Tarry-breeks, a sailor.
Tarry-finger'd, or *tarry-handit*, given to pilfering.
Tartan, a cloth now well known ; the Scottish Lowland or Highland dialect, Highland manner or custom.
Tartle, to hesitate in a bargain ; *to tartle at one*, to appear not to know him.
Tash, a blemish, the appearance of having been used ; to tarnish, to render the worse of wear.
Tass, a small cup for drinking from, without any regard to its shape or composition.
Tassie, a small measure for liquor.
Tatter-wallups, rags, tatters.
Tauch, tallow ; to grease ; *tauchy*, greasy.
Tauk, talk ; to talk.
Tauld, or *tald*, told.
Taupie, *taupie*, a foolish or childish young person.
Taut, to mat ; *tauty*, or *tautit*, matted together, spoken of wool.
Taw, a favourite marble among boys ; to handle, to pull.
Tawie, that allows itself to be handled freely.
Taws, a whip, a scourge.
Tawtie, a potatoe.
Teat, a small quantity.
Ted, to spread, to scatter, to ravel, to entangle ; scattered, entangled.
Tedding, spreading after the mower.
Tee, thee ; the goal in curling, a mark set up in playing at quoits.
Tee-hee, a burst of laughter ; to burst out into laughter.
Teeyer, tiger.
Teen, or *tynd*, anger, sorrow.
Teens, the tens in a person's age, as thirteen, &c.
Teet, a peep ; to peep.
Teethless-bawtie, toothless cur.
Teethless-gab, a mouth wanting the teeth, an expression of scorn.
Temmin, taminy, a woollen stuff.
Ten-hours-bite, a slight feed to the horses while in the yoke in the forenoon.
Tensum, ten together.
Tent, a field pulpit ; care, heed ; to take care of. *To tak tent*, to beware of, to take heed.
Tentie, heedful, cautious ; *tentily*, cautiously, carefully ; *tentless*, careless, incautious.
Teuch, or *teugh*, tough ; *teuchly*, toughly.
Teuk, took.
Teynd, to tithe ; *teynds*, tithes.
Thack, thatch ; *thack an' rape*, covered, secured from rain.
Thae, these.
Thafts, the benches of a boat on which the rowers sit.
Thairm, or *therm*, catgut for fiddle-strings.
Thane, not well roasted or boiled.
Thankit, *thanket*, thanked ; did thank.
The, used as to, or this, in English ; *the day*, to-day, this day.
Thee, or *theigh*, the thigh.
Theek, to thatch ; *theeker*, a thatcher ; *theekit*, thatched.
Thegither, together.
Theirsel', *theirsels*, *themsel*, *themsels*, themselves.
Thereanent, concerning that.
Thereintill, therein.
Thereout, without.
Theretill, thereto.
Thick, intimate, familiar.
Thieveless, forbidding, cold, indifferent, repulsive.
Thig, to borrow, to beg ; *thiggar*, crowding, making a noise ; a seeker of alms.
Think-shame, be ashamed.
Thir, these here, used only of things at hand.
Thirl, a thrill ; to thrill.
Thissle, *thrissle*, a thistle.
Thocht, a thought ; a small quantity ; *thochtfu'*, or *thochty*, thoughtful.
Thole, to suffer, to endure.
Thon, yon ; *thonder*, yonder.
Thoum, or *thoumb*, the thumb.
Thou's, thou art.
Thowe, a thaw ; to thaw.
Thowl, the notch in the side of a boat in which the oar acts.
Thowless, inactive, feeble, silly.
Thowl-pins, pieces of wood, or iron, which prevent the oar from leaving the *thowl*.
Thrang, throng ; a crowd.
Thrapple, throat, the windpipe ; to throttle.
Thrash, a stroke ; a rush ; to thresh, to beat ; *thrashes*, rushes.
Thrave, threve, thrived ; in husbandry, twenty-four sheaves, or two shocks of corn.
Thraw, a twist, a twine, a cross, a contradiction, a throe, a sprain ; to twist, to cross, to contradict.
Thrawart, cross-tempered.
Thrawin, twisting, &c. ; *thrawn*, crossed, twisted, twined.
Threed, thread ; to thread.
Three-neukit, three-cornered, triangular.
Threep, or *threap*, to maintain by dint of assertion.
Threesum, three together.
Threshin, thrashing ; *threshin-tree*, a flail.
Thretteen, thirteen ; *threttent*, the thirteenth ; *thretty*, thirty ; *thrid*, the third.
Thrimmle, to press through with difficulty.
Thrist, thirst.
Thrivin, thriving.
Throch, to carry through, to accomplish ; *throch-stane*, a grave-stone.
Throost, thrust.
Througang, a passage through.
Througawn, that goes through labour without shrinking or being disheartened ; persevering in toil.
Through, to go on with, to make out.
Throu'ther, confused, distempered, out of order.
Thrum, sound of a spinning wheel in motion ; the thread remaining at the end of a web.
Thud, a blow, an instantaneous gust of wind beating against an object ; to strike, to beat upon with intermitting gusts.
Thumble, a thimble.
Thummart. See *Foumart*.
Thumpit, thumped.
Thurst, a thrust, a push, a stab ; to drive, to stab ; to push or thrust, to intrude.
Thysel, thyself.
Tick, a dot ; a click ; to dot, to click as a watch.
Ticket, a blow.
Tid, humour, time.
Tift, order, health, condition ; quarrel.
Tig, a gentle stroke ; to strike gently.
Tig-tow, to strike gently, backwards and forwards, to pat reciprocally.
Till't, to it.
Time-about, alternately.
Timmer, timber.
Timmer-tuned, having an unmusical voice.
Tine, *tyne*, to lose ; *tint*, lost.
Tinkler, a tinker.
Tip or *tippenny*, ale at twopence per bottle.
Tip, a ram ; to fashion, to point with iron.
Tippence, twopence.
Tippenize, to drink tippenny.
Tir, or *tirl*, to tap or rap gently ; to uncover, to tear off as a storm does a thatch roof.
Tirlass, a woven wire frame, a lattice ; to lattice ; *tirlassed*, latticed.

Tirlin, or *tirlet*, uncovering.
Tirly-whirly, a whirligig.
Tirrivee, a hasty fit of passion.
Tither, the other.
Titlin, the hedge-sparrow.
Tittle, a whisper; to whisper, to prate idly; *tittlin*, whispering.
Titty, sister.
To, close.
Tocher, marriage portion; *tocher-bands*, marriage bonds.
Tod, or *tod-lowrie*, a fox. *Tod i' the fauld*, fox in the fold.
Tod, a pet, a fit of sulkiness.
Todle, *toddle*, a rocking motion like that of a child in walking, the wimpling run of a small stream; to move in walking with a rocking motion; *todlin*, rocking, wimpling.
To-look-to, a support, something in expectation, something laid up for futurity, a marriage portion.
Tongue-tackit. See *Tackit*.
Too fa' o' the nicht, when twilight darkens into night. *To fa'*, a building added, a lean-to.
Toom, empty; to empty.
Toop, a ram.
Toothfu', a moderate quantity of liquor.
Toots! tush.
Top, excellent.
Tore, or *tor*, the arm of a chair.
Tosh, tidy.
Tosie, or *tozy*, tipsy.
Toss, toast.
To-the-fore, remaining, laid up beyond the usual expenses of living.
Tott, a term of fondness to a child. *The hail tott*, the whole number.
Tottin, tottering, walking with the unsteady step of an infant.
Touk, took; a tuck; to tuck.
Touls, tools.
Toun, a town; a hamlet; a farm-house.
Toush, *toosh*, a woman's short gown.
Tousle, *touzle*, to teaze, to handle roughly, to dishevel the hair.
Tousy, or *towzie*, rough, shaggy.
Tout, the blast of a horn or trumpet; to blow a horn or trumpet; a hearty drink.
Toutie, an appellation given to a child, as if humorously blaming him with tippling.
Tovy, fuddled.
Tow, a rope.
Towmont, a twelvemonth.
Towt, a fit of illness; *towtie*, subject to fits of illness.
Toy, a very old fashion of female head-dress.
Toyte, to totter like old age.
Traik, disaster, damage; to decline in health; to go idly from one place to another.
Traiket, draggled, disordered, dirty in dress. A fowl is said to be *traiket*, when its dirty feathers are deranged after rain.
Trams, the shafts of a cart or hand-barrow; the legs.
Trause, an entry, a passage through a house from front to back.
Transmugrify, to metamorphose; *transmugrified*, transmigrated, metamorphosed.
Trantlums, old or useless tools or ware.
Trap, a flight of wooden steps, generally called a trap ladder.
Trashtrie, trash, rubbish.
Tree, a barrel.
Trewan, a truant; a trowel.
Trews, stockings and breeches all of one piece.
Trewsers, trowsers.
Trickie, full of tricks.
Trig, neat, handsome.
Trim, to drub.
Trimly, excellently.
Trindle, *trinle*, or *trintle*, the wheel of a barrow; a trundle, a roll; to trundle, to roll.
Trinkle, to trickle; *trinklin*, trickling.
Trip, a flock, a number.
Troggers, or *troggin'*, wandering merchants, goods to truck or dispose of.
Troke, an exchange; to barter, to exchange one thing for another; to traffic in barter, to perform the act of bartering.
Trotters, sheep-feet.
Trou, to exercise belief; to believe, or credit any person or thing; *trouin*, believing.
Troulis, *troulins*, truly.
Trowth, a petty oath, in faith, in truth, the truth, troth.
Truff, a turf; to steal.
Trugs, troth, a petty oath.
Trummle, to tremble.
Trump, a Jew's harp; to deceive, to cheat; to go off in consequence of disgrace or necessity.
Trumph, trump, a winning card; a trifle.
Truncher, a trencher.
Tryste, an appointment; a fair, a cattle market; to appoint one, to meet a person. *To make a tryste*, to make an appointment.
Try't, tried.
Tuft, a tuft.
Tuftle, to ruffle, to rumple, to disorder, to dishevel.
Tug, raw hide, of which in old times plough-traces were frequently made.
Tug or towe, either in leather or rope.
Tuggle, a contention by pulling; to contend about by pulling.
Tulchane, a calf's skin stuffed with straw, and set beside a cow to make her give her milk.
Tulchane Bishop, one who received the episcopate on condition of assigning the temporalities to a secular person.
Tulsh, a flabby infant.
Tulzie, *tulyie*, a quarrel; to quarrel, to fight.
Tummle, a tumble; to overturn; *tummle the wilcat*, to tumble heels over head.
Tummler-wheels, the wheels of a kind of low cart.
Tummlers, glass drinking cups; part of a weaver's loom.
Ture, tore.
Turkasses, pincers.
Turn, an office, a task.
Turnpike, a winding stair.
Turrs, turfs.
Twa, two; *twa-fauld*, twofold.
Twad, it would.
Twahaund crack, a familiar conversation between two.
Twall, *twal*, twelve; *twallpennies*, a Scots shilling, or one penny English; *twalt*, the twelfth.
Twasum, two together.
Twa-three, a few.
Tway, two.
Tweesh, betwixt.
Twig, a twitch; to twitch.
Twin, to part, to deprive.
Twine, to twist.
Twinters, sheep of two years old.
Twissle, or *twistle*, twisting, the art of making a rope.
Twitch, an instant of time.
Tyesday, Tuesday.
Tyke, a dog; used in jocularity to a person.
Tyken, tick, a strong striped cloth for beds and pillows.
Tylie, or *taillie*, a junt, a slice, as of beef.
Tyste, to entice.

U

UGG, to feel extreme loathing at; *ugging*, a loathing; *uggsum*, or *uggsome*, very loathsome.
Uggsumness, or *uggsomeness*, loathsomeness.
Umwhile, or *unquhile*, of old, some time ago, the late.
Unback'd-filly, a young mare hitherto unsaddled.
Uncannily, incautiously, carelessly; *uncanny*, dangerous.
Unchancy, unlucky, dangerous.
Unco, strange, uncouth; very, very great, prodigious.
Unco pack and thick thegither, very intimate and friendly.
Uncos, or *uncoes*, news.
Undeimous, inconceivable, incalculable.
Undocht, weak, silly.
Uneith, not easy, difficult.
Unfauld, unfold.
Unfeiry, infirm, inactive.
Undoin, undoing, ruin.
Unhandy, unwieldy, clumsy.
Unheartsome, unchcerful.
Unkent, or *unkenned*, unknown.
Unkin, unkind.
Unloosome, *unloosum*, unlovely.
Unsicker, uncertain, wavering, insecure, unsteady.
Unskaith'd, unhurt, undamaged.
Unsneck, to take a door off the latch.
Unsonsy, unlucky, mischievous.
Unweeting, unwittingly, unknowingly.
Upcast, a taunt, a reproach.
Upcome, the upshot, the issue, the consequence.
Upgang, an ascent.
Uphaud, a support; to uphold, to support.
Upo', upon.
Upsides, equally up, equal to, quits. *To be upsides wi'*, to be revenged on.
Uptack, comprehension, conception; to comprehend, to take up, as in learning.
Upwith, upwards.
Usquebae, whisky.

V

VAICANCE, vacation.
Vaigrie, a freak, a piece of folly, a whimsy, a foolish fancy.
Vaiprin or *vap'rin'*, vapouring.
Vauntie, joyous, delight which cannot contain itself.
Vera, very.
Virl, a ring, such as those round the ends of flutes, canes, &c.
Vittle, grain, generally standing corn; to support in victuals; *vittler*, a corn merchant; *vittles*, victuals.
Vively, lively, clearly.

Vizzy, an aim; to take aim at, as with a musket.
Voggy, vogie, or *vowgie*, vain, proud, conceited.
Vow! surprising.
Vowster, a boaster.
Vowt, a vault.

W

WA', a wall; *wa's*, walls.
Wa', way. *Gang your wa'*, go your way.
Wab, a web.
Wabster, a weaver.
Wad, would; a bet, a pledge; to bet.
Wadna, would not.
Wae, wo, sorrow; *waefu'*, woful.
Waefu'-woodie, hangman's rope.
Waeness, sadness.
Waesheart! alas for you!
Waesucks! or *waes me!* alas! O the pity!
Waff, or *waiff*, wandering, shabby, little worth; *waffy*, a vagabond, a scurvy person.
Waff, a slight touch of any thing passing; a breath of wind, as that from a fan.
Waft, woof.
Wa-gang, a departure; the gout, the sensation of taste arising from any thing swallowed.
Waifs an' crocks, stray sheep and old ewes; past breeding.
Waigle, a waddle; to waddle.
Waik, a watch; a company of musicians who serenade on the street early in the morning; to watch.
Waipon, a weapon.
Waipon-shaw, a kind of ancient military parade.
Wair, wire; the cover of a pillow; to spend.
Wair'd, spent.
Waird, confinement; a guard; to ward; to guard.
Wairsh, insipid; *wairshness*, insipidity.
Waistin, a consumption.
Waistry, prodigality, profusion.
Waiter, water.
Waicome, a welcome; to welcome.
Wald, or *wauld*, to wield, to manage, to govern, to possess.
Wale, the choice; to choose; *wal'd*, chose, chosen.
Walie, or *wally*, ample, large, jolly, also an exclamation of distress.
Walise, a portmanteau.
Wall, a well.
Wall-carses, water-cresses.
Wallies, toys, gewgaws.
Wallop, to leap, to tumble.
Wallow, to fade, to wither.
Walsh, insipid.
Walt, a welt; to welt.
Walter, to wallow, to roll, to welter.
Walth, wealth, plenty; *walthy*, wealthy, plenteous.
Wame, the womb, the belly.
Wamefu', a bellyful.
Wan, won; was permitted to go, arrived.
Wanchance, misluck, misfortune; *wanchansie*, unlucky.
Wandocht, weak, silly.
Wangrace, wickedness, ungracefulness; *wangracefu'*, wicked, graceless, ungraceful.
Wanrestfu', restless.
Wanruly, unruly.
Wansday, Wednesday.
Wanter, an unmarried person.
Wanwordy, unworthy.
Wanworth, a mere nothing in value, an undervalue.
Wap, a slap; to slap.
Wappon, a weapon.
War, were.
War, or *waur*, worse.
Warble, to wriggle.
Ware, spend.
Wark, work; *wark-claes*, clothes for working in; *wark-day*, a working-day; *warklume*, a tool to work with; *wark-man*, a labourer.
Warl, or *warld*, the world.
Warl's gear, world's wealth.
Warld's-worm, a miser.
Warlock, a wizard; *warlock-knowe*, a knoll where warlocks once held trystes.
Warly, worldly, parsimonious.
Warna, were not.
Warp, the number four, used by fish-women in reckoning oysters.
Warran, a warrant; to warrant.
Warse, worse; *warst*, worst.
Warsle, a wrestle; to wrestle; *warsl'd*, wrestled.
Wart, were it, wert.
Wast, west; the west.
Wastlins, of, or belonging to the west; *wastlin*, westward.
Wastrie, prodigality.
Wat, wet; given to tippling; *I wat*, I wot, I know.
Water, a river, a running water; *water-brash*, a belching up of water from the stomach; *water-brose*, brose made of meal and water; *water-gang*, the race of a mill; *water-kelpie*, the spirit of the waters; *water-mouth*, the mouth of a river.
Watna, or *waitna*, wot not.
Watshod, having the shoes wet.
Wattin, woting; a wetting.
Wattle, a twig; a wand.
Wauble, to swing, to reel.
Waud, a wade; to wade.
Waugh, wauk, or *waughie*, moist, damp.
Waught, a large draught; to drink in large draughts.
Wauk, or *wa'k*, a walk; to walk.
Wauk, a wake; to full cloth, to watch; *wauk*, or *wauken*, to awake, to watch; *waukin*, waking, watching.
Waukit, thickened, as fullers do cloth.
Wauk-mill, a fulling mill; *wauk-miller*, a fuller.
Waukrife, not apt to sleep.
Waulie, strong.
Waumle, or *wauble*, to tumble, to undulate, to vibrate as a rod thrown into the air; to waggle.
Waund, a wand, a fishing rod, a ferule.
Wauner, a wander; to wander.
Waur, or *war*, worse; to worst.
Weau, or *weanie*, a child; *weauly*, childish.
Wearifu', fatiguing, vexatious, tedious, troublesome; *weary-widdle*, toilsome contest of life.
Weavin' the stockin'. To knit stockings.
Web, or *wab*, the covering of the intestines, the caul, the epidermis.
Wecht, a hoop covered with leather like a drum head, a utensil used in husbandry; *wechts*, scales, also the weights.
Wee, little; to weigh; *wee things*, little ones; *wee bit*, a small matter.
Weed, a sort of fever to which nurses and women in childbed are subject.
Weeder-clips, instrument for pulling up weeds.
Weegle, wiggle, to waggle.
Weel, well, not sick; well, properly; *weelfare*, welfare; *weel-faur'd*, well-favoured.
Weepers, the strips of muslin stitched on the sleeves of a coat or gown as a badge of mourning.
Weer, to wear; to stop, to turn any creature back, about, or away, in a cautious manner.
Wees, a balance beam and scales.
Weet, rain; wetness; to wet; *weetin'*, wetting, raining; *weety*, wet, rainy.
Weirdless, luckless, worthless, of hopeless expectation.
Wersh, insipid, tasteless.
We'se, we shall.
Wesson, throat.
Westlin. See *Wastlin*.
Westlins. See *Wastlins*.
Wha, who.
Whaizle, or *wheezle*, a wheeze; to wheeze.
Whalp, a whelp; to whelp.
Wham, whom.
Whan, when.
Whang, a leathern string; a piece of cheese, bread, &c.; to give the strappado.
Whar, or *whare*, where; *whare'er*, wherever.
Wha's, who is.
Whase, whose.
Whatna, what a, what sort of a.
Whatreck, yet, nevertheless.
Whauk, a blow; to beat.
Whaukie, whisky.
Whaup, a curlew.
Whaurie, a misgrown child.
Wheelin, coarse worsted.
Wheen, a number.
Wheep, an instant; to bind about with twine or thread. *Penny-wheep*, small beer
Wheeple, whipple, an indistinct whistle; to make an ineffectual attempt to whistle.
Wheeze, a flattery, a deception; to flatter, to deceive.
Whew, a whistle; to whistle.
Whid, or *whud*, a lie; to lie, to tell a falsehood; an instantaneous motion; hasty; *whiddin*, running as a hare or cony.
Whig, the sour part of cream.
Whigmaleeries, whims, fancies, gewgaws, toys.
While, to spend a portion of time, used most commonly in a neuter sense in English.
Whiles, sometimes.
Whilk, which.
Whillie, or *whillirha*, a cheat, a lie, a fawning deceitful person, to cheat, to cozen, to gull.
Whin, ragstone, basalt.
Whinge, to whine; *whingein*, whining.
Whinny, producing furze.
Whins, or *whuns*, furze. *To tak' through the whuns*, to be severely reproved.
Whip-aff, whup-aff or *awa*, to start off quickly; to snatch a thing away quickly.
Whir, or *whirrin'*, the sound made by the flight of the partridge.
Whirligigums, useless ornaments, trifling appendages.
Whisht, silence. *To hold one's whisht*, to be silent.
Whisk, a whip, a lash, a stroke; to whip, to lash; *whiskit*, lashed.

Whiskin'-beard, a beard like the whiskers of a cat.
Whisky-tackets, pimples on the face.
Whissle, *whussle*, a whistle, a blow. *To weet the whissle*, to take a drink.
White, a cutting or slicing with a knife; to cut or slice wood with a knife.
Whitter, to move with a quick motion of the feet, as a rat; refreshment; a hearty draught of liquor.
Whittle, or *whuttle*, a knife.
Whittle, to cut with a knife.
Whittrit, a weasel.
Whommil, or *whamm'le*, to overturn, to turn upside down.
Whommilt, or *whamml't*, turned upside down, overturned.
Whult, a large piece, a fall.
Whulter, *whultin*, a thumper, a thing large in size.
Whun, ragstone, basalt; of or belonging to ragstone.
Whun-stane, a whin-stone.
Whunner, the rattling noise occasioned by the stroke of any thing rapidly.
Whup, a whip.
Whurl, to whirl.
Whurl, or *whurly*, a child of a fawning cunning disposition.
Whurligig, a toy that whirls round, a whimsy.
Whurliwha. See *Whillie*.
Whyles, at times.
Wicht, powerful, strong; inventive; of a superior genius.
Wick, the corner, as the wick of the mouth or eye; a term in curling; to strike a stone in an oblique direction.
Wicker, the barb of a hook.
Widdie, a rope. See *Wuddie*.
Widdie, a haddock dried without splitting.
Widdifu', twisted like a withy; one who merits hanging.
Widdle, struggle, bustle, effort. See *Wuddle*.
Wiel, a small whirlpool.
Wife, a woman; *wifie*, a diminutive or endearing term for wife.
Wig, a description of flour-bread; the watery liquor which separates from butter-milk.
Wight, strong, a man; *fremit-wight*, a stranger.
Wil-cat, a wild cat.
Wil-cat (*to tumble the*), to tumble heels over head.
Wil-fire, or *wulfire*, the erysipelas, or St. Anthony's fire.
Wilfu', willing, stubborn.
Wilk, or *wulk*, a shell-fish.
Will, or *wull*, wild, bewildered.
Willie-wain, a willow wand.
Willie-waught, a hearty drink.
Wilsome, wild, lonely.
Wilyart, bashful and reserved; avoiding society, timid; *wilyart-glower*, a bewildered, dismayed stare.
Wimmle, a wimble; to bore with a wimble.
Wimple, a curl, an undulation; to undulate, to purl; *wimplin*, curling, purling, undulating.
Win, to won, to dwell; to be allowed to go, to have it in one's power to go.
Win, or *wun*, wind; to winnow, to dry in the air.
Win, *wun*, or *wund*, boasting, empty bravado.
Win-aboon, to get above.
Win-about, to circumvent.
Win-aff, to get away.
Win-afore, to get before.
Win-at, to reach.
Win-awa, to get away.
Win ben, to get within, to get into the inner apartment.
Win butt, to be permitted to go into the outer apartment.
Win-by, to get past.
Windin, winding.
Windy, boasting, boastful, ostentatious.
Win-forrat, to get forward.
Wink, an instant, a twinkling; *winkin*, winking, twinkling.
Winna, or *winnae*, will not.
Winnins, earnings.
Winnin'-thread, putting thread into hanks.
Winnle-strae, the stalk of rye-grass.
Winnock, a window.
Winnock-bunker, window seat
Winny, windy.
Win-owre, to get over, to surmount.
Winsome, hearty, vaunted, gay.
Wintle, or *wuntle*, a staggering motion; to stagger, to reel.
Winze, or *wunze*, an oath; to swear.
Wirricow, a bugbear.
Wise (*s* like *z*) guise, manner.
Wise, to advise, to turn to another way by gentle means.
Wise-like, respectable in dress or appearance.
Wishy-washy, spiritless, tasteless, without consistency, vapid, thin, watery.
Wiss, a wish; to wish; to wot.
Withershins, backward motion, cross motion against the sun, contrary, counter.
Withoutin, without, in want of.
Witten, knowledge.
Wizzen, the weasand, the throat; to wither, to become dry, to shrink; *wizzent*, hide-bound, dried, shrunk.
Wonner, a wonder; to wonder; *wonner't*, wonder at it.
Woer-babs, the garter knotted below the knee with a couple of loops.
Woo', wool.
Woosh, or *wush*, washed.
Wordy, worthy.
Worry, to strangle, to suffocate.
Worset, worsted.
Wow, an exclamation of pleasure, surprise, or grief.
Wowf, to bark.
Wrack, to teaze, to vex.
Wraith, a spirit or ghost; an apparition exactly like a living person, whose appearance is said to forebode the person's approaching death.
Wrang, wrong; to wrong; wrung.
Wrat, a wart.
Wreathe, to writhe.
Wreeth, wreath, a drifted heap of snow.
Wright, a house carpenter.
Wrist, a sprain; to sprain.
Writer, an attorney.
Wud, wild, mad; *wud-mad*, distracted.
Wud, a wood.
Wuddie, or *woodie*, a rope, a halter; more properly one made of withes or willows.
Wuddle, to wriggle.
Wuddyfu', a ropeful, a person who deserves a rope.
Wullie, Willie, diminutive of William.
Wull. See *Will*.
Wull, will; to will; *wullin*, willing.
Wummle. See *Wimmle*.
Wurble, a twist, a twine, a rub between the finger and thumb; to twist, to twine, to crush by friction between the thumb and finger.
Ware, wore.
Wursum, pus, putrid matter.
Wurtle, a writhe; to writhe as a worm.
Warts, herbs, wort.
Wyle, to influence artfully, to entice.
Wyliecoat, a flannel vest.
Wyss, in the enjoyment of reason; *no wyss*, insane.
Wyte, blame, to blame.

Y

YAD, *yaud*, a cow; an old mare; a worn-out horse.
Yaff, or *yamph*, a bark; to prate, to bark.
Yaird, a yard, a kitchen garden.
Yap, or *yaup*, hungry; to cry as nestlings for food.
Yarp, or *yerp*, a whine, a fretting, a carping; to whine, to fret, to carp.
Yaumer, to murmur.
Ye, this pronoun is frequently used for thou.
Year is used both for singular and plural, years.
Yearlings, *yealings*, born in the same year, coevals.
Ye'd, ye would; ye had.
Yedd, a contention, a wrangle; to contend.
Yeldrin, the yellow-hammer.
Yell, ye will.
Yell, or *yeld*, barren, that gives no milk.
Yelloch, to squall.
Yellockin, squalling.
Yer, your; *ye're*, you are.
Yerk, a blow, a whip; to lash, to beat, to strike with the open hand; to jerk; *yerkit*, jerked, lashed.
Yersel, yourself.
Ye'se, ye shall.
Yesk, a hiccup, to hiccup.
Yestreen, yesternight.
Yett, a gate.
Yill, ale.
Yince, once.
Yird, earth; to earth, to bury.
Yirdit, buried.
Yirm, to murmur, to whine, to importune with, murmuring.
Yirn, to coagulate milk.
Yirnin, rennet, the liquid used to coagulate milk.
Yirr, a snarl; to snarl like a dog.
Yitt-meal, oat meal.
Yoke, to engage, to fall to fighting.
Yokin, yoking; a bout.
Yole, a yawl.
Yonner, yonder.
Yont, or *ayont*, beyond, farther back.
Youdith, youth.
Youk, *yeuk*, the itch; *youky*, itchy.
Youl, *yowl*, a howl; to howl as a dog.
Young-guidman, a man newly married; *young-guidwife*, a woman newly married.
Yoursel, yourself.
Yowden, wearied.
Yowe, a ewe.
Yowf, a blow; to bark as a dog.
Yowie, diminutive of *Yowe*.
Yowl, a squall, a scream; to scream, to squall.
Yule, Christmas.
Yule-e'en, Christmas-eve.
Yyte, the yellow-hammer.

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